



RETAILING RELIGION

The commercialization of
the holy days

U N I V E R S I T Y M A G A Z I N E

Concordia

APOCALYPSE WHEN > RETHINKING FOOD > STRIKING OUT FEAR

**"I never thought my
alumni group rates
could save me so much."**

– Kitty Huang
Satisfied client since 2009



See how good your quote can be.

At TD Insurance Meloche Monnex, we know how important it is to save wherever you can. As a graduate or student of **Concordia University**, you can enjoy preferred group rates on your home and auto insurance and other exclusive privileges, thanks to our partnership with your association. You'll also benefit from great coverage and outstanding service. We believe in making insurance easy to understand so you can choose your coverage with confidence.



Get an online quote at
www.melochemonnex.com/concordia
or call 1-866-352-6187

Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.
Saturday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Insurance program sponsored by the



The TD Insurance Meloche Monnex home and auto insurance program is underwritten by **SECURITY NATIONAL INSURANCE COMPANY**. The program is distributed by Meloche Monnex Insurance and Financial Services Inc. in Quebec and by Meloche Monnex Financial Services Inc. in the rest of Canada.

Due to provincial legislation, our auto insurance program is not offered in British Columbia, Manitoba or Saskatchewan.

*No purchase required. Contest organized jointly with Primum Insurance Company and open to members, employees and other eligible persons belonging to employer, professional and alumni groups which have an agreement with and are entitled to group rates from the organizers. Contest ends on January 31, 2013. 1 prize to be won. The winner may choose the prize between a Lexus RX 450h with all basic standard features including freight and pre-delivery inspection for a total value of \$60,000 or \$60,000 in Canadian funds. The winner will be responsible to pay for the sale taxes applicable to the vehicle. Skill-testing question required. Odds of winning depend on number of entries received. Complete contest rules available at www.melochemonnex.com/contest.

©The TD logo and other trade-marks are the property of The Toronto-Dominion Bank or a wholly-owned subsidiary, in Canada and/or other countries.

NEW BOARD CHAIR LOOKS FORWARD, NOT BACK

Norman Hébert Jr.,
BComm 77, assumes the
top spot on Concordia's
Board of Governors.

By Jake Brennan



8

IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT (OR IS IT?)

Will the world end
December 21, 2012?
Concordia professor of
religion Lorenzo DiTommaso
deconstructs this and other
apocalyptic prophecies.

By Paloma Friedman

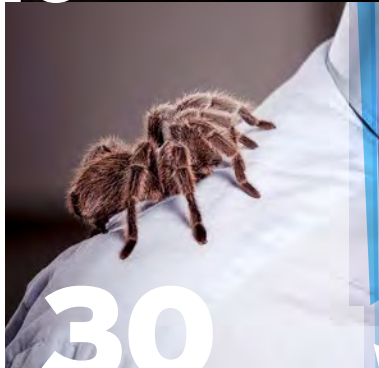


20

UNTANGLING THE WEB OF FEAR

Associate professor of
psychology Adam Radomsky
and his team research a new
approach to overcoming
phobias in Concordia's Anxiety
and Obsessive-Compulsive
Disorders Laboratory.

By Luciana Gravotta



30



12

DECK THE MALLS

Have religious holidays
become too commercial?
If so, what are the costs
and benefits? Concordia
experts respond.

By Louise Morgan



24

THOUGHT FOR FOOD

Four members of
Concordia's Food
Studies Research Group
let readers digest food's
multidimensional shelf
space in our culture.

By Scott McCulloch



36

34

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: ENGINEERING AND COMPUTER SCIENCE

The faculty celebrates its
students' satellite-design
success and new institute
and research chairs.

HOMECOMING 2012: BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME

The university welcomed thousands to its annual Homecoming.

By Shaimaa El-Ghazaly

winter 2012/13 volume 36 number 4

magazine.concordia.ca

Cover: Religious holidays and commerce
Credit: Shutterstock images composite

This publication is printed on 100% recycled paper, including 20% post consumer waste. For each ton of recycled paper that displaces a ton of virgin paper, it reduces total energy consumption by 27%, greenhouse gas emissions by 47%, particulate emissions by 28%, wastewater by 33%, solid waste by 54% and wood use by 100%.

- 3 EDITOR'S VOICE
- 4 CONCORDIA NEWS
- 38 ALUMNI NEWS
- 40 CLASS ACTS
- 46 WORDS & MUSIC
- 48 ENOUGH SAID

accent

alumni-newsletter

Put an Accent on news.

Accent delivers Concordia news conveniently to your inbox. Sign up for our monthly e-newsletter at concordia.ca/alumni/accent.



SETTING AN EXAMPLE: A fitting (and planned) tribute



The parents of Michael Lonardo, BA 75, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary in October. In tribute, Lonardo and his wife, Olivia Lewis, endowed a Concordia scholarship in his parents' name. The Maria and Domenico Lonardo Scholarship will annually award \$1,000 to a Faculty of Arts and Science student studying immigrant life in Canada.

"We feel a great sense of satisfaction with this gift and I think Michael's parents will be very proud, given the importance they have attached to education. Neither of his parents had the opportunity to go to school because they lived in a small village. They're both very bright.

Maria and Dominic are not going to be with us forever, but their names live on forever in this scholarship.

A \$1,000 scholarship may not make a difference in a student's career, but it could. I suspect people don't realize how easy planned giving can be, not to mention how good it makes you feel."

Olivia Lewis

"My parents immigrated to Canada from Italy in the 1950s with a very limited education. As a result, education for my brother and me became top priority — we both have three degrees. I graduated from Concordia in 1975 with an honours BA in history.

I thought it would be fitting to donate funds that could be used for students studying immigrant life in Canada.

To the student recipients, the fact that they get a scholarship is as important as the money that's attached to it.

I feel good about the donation, but in a way, it's an easy thing to do, to give money for a purpose you believe is important."

Michael Lonardo, BA 75

Join Michael Lonardo and Olivia Lewis in planning a gift to Concordia.

Info: concordia.ca/alumni-giving | 514-848-2424, ext. 8945 | 1-888-777-3330, ext. 8945 | silvia.ugolini@concordia.ca



Are we still here?

Those of us of a certain age will remember the distinctively Canadian comedic duo Wayne and Shuster. Their long-running sketch-comedy show began on CBC Radio in 1946 and switched to TV in 1954, where it first appeared weekly and then in specials until the late 1980s.

My favourite Wayne and Shuster bit was one of their shortest. It featured a long-bearded, white-robed man holding a sign that read, "The world will end at midnight." The man then turned around to reveal the flipside: "12:30 in Newfoundland."

While only Canadians will fully get that joke, anyone familiar with the countless apocalypse predictions in recent memory, let alone throughout history, can laugh along with Wayne and Shuster as they point out the absurdity of those claims.

If you're reading this on or after December 21, 2012, that means that indeed another doom-and-gloom prophecy has come and gone. If it's not yet the first day of this year's winter, Concordia religion professor and expert on apocalypticism Lorenzo DiTommaso has some advice for those who've packed their bags and are ready to head for the hills on December 20: Chill.

DiTommaso examines end-of-the-world scenarios from biblical times up to today. As he notes in "It's the end of the world as we know it (or is it?)" on page 20, "One hundred per cent of these prophecies have failed. There's not even one success." That's one benefit of his field of study: he can prove — with absolute certainty — all past assertions that the end is nigh have been thus far false. The same usually can't be said of most other fields of social sciences and

humanities studies: while we know one plus one doesn't equal three, can we ever unequivocally assert that Aristotle or Marx were completely wrong?

Nonetheless, many true believers — no matter how kooky their views are — tend not to let things like hard facts get in the way of the faith. Many still do fear that our days are numbered — rationally or not.

Fortunately Concordia has the Anxiety and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorders Laboratory, led by Adam Radomsky, an associate professor of psychology. Radomsky and the lab members may not study those with apophytophobia (not a real word), but they are researching ways to help those with arachnophobia (fear of spiders) and obsessive-compulsive disorder, as well as other anxiety-related dreads. (See "Untangling the web of fear" on page 30.)

Radomsky and his team study a controversial approach to alleviating stress, using "safety behaviour" — providing those suffering certain phobias to protect themselves while encountering the thing they fear. This differs from the more accepted exposure therapy approach, in which subjects are exposed to the source of their fear, without any danger, to prevent an escape from the anxiety-provoking situation.



So if you're still afraid of December 21, 2012, or the next impending doomsday, just put on your hazmat suit and head out for last-minute Christmas shopping.

Before you do, though, you may want to read "Deck the malls" on page 12. Good thing for *Concordia University Magazine*! ■

Concordia

Concordia University Magazine welcomes readers' comments. Letters should include the writer's full name, address, school(s), degree(s) and year(s) of graduation for alumni. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. No letter will be published without the full name of the correspondent.

Concordia University Magazine is published four times a year for alumni and friends of Concordia University. Opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of the alumni associations or of the university.

Please address editorial correspondence to:
The Editor, Howard Bokser
Concordia University Magazine
1455 De Maisonneuve Blvd. W.
FB 520, Montreal, QC H3G 1M8
Phone: 514-848-2424, ext. 3826
email: Howard.Bokser@concordia.ca

For advertising information, call
514-848-2424, ext. 3819.

Editorial contributor: Scott McCulloch
Student intern: Shaimaa El-Ghazaly

Design: University Communications Services
T13-10503

NEW PRESIDENT INSTALLED AT CONVOCAATION

Concordia's new president and vice-chancellor Alan Shepard looked to the university's illustrious past and its challenging and exciting future in a speech he delivered during his official installation. The ceremony took place as part of Concordia's Faculty of Arts and Science fall convocation at Montreal's Place des Arts on October 30.

Shepard's address recognized many of the great things that have happened at Concordia and are happening now in its classrooms. Yet it was also a call to action, underlining the vital need for the university to continue adapting to a rapidly

changing world. "It seems clear now that technology will press us to change the environment for teaching and learning at a faster pace than what we have been comfortable with historically," he said. "We will need to be nimble, smart and strategic. We will need to work together to think about how Concordia... will adapt itself to the rapidly changing dynamics of the 21st century."

Another issue facing the university, Shepard contended, is "a certain scepticism" growing around the value of a traditional university education. To continue to be relevant, Concordia must be open to change, he said. "My point is that bold thinking is essential — bold, ambitious thinking." ■

— Tom Peacock

CONCORDIA PRESIDENT
ALAN SHEPARD WITH AN
ENTHUSIASTIC ARTS AND
SCIENCE GRADUATE AT
CONVOCAATION ON OCTOBER 30.





FIGHTING ALZHEIMER'S BEFORE ITS ONSET

By the time older adults are diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, the brain damage is irreparable. For now, modern medicine is able to slow the progression of the disease yet is incapable of reversing it. What if there was a way to detect if someone is on the path to Alzheimer's before substantial and non-reversible brain damage sets in?

This was the question Erin K. Johns, MA (psych.) '08, a doctoral student in Concordia's Department of Psychology and member of the Centre for Research in Human Development, asked when she started her research on older adults with mild cognitive impairment (MCI). These adults show slight impairments in memory, as well as in "executive functions" like attention, planning and problem solving. While the impairments are mild, adults with MCI have a high risk of developing Alzheimer's disease.

The study was published in the *Journal of the International Neuropsychological Society* and was funded by the Quebec Network for Research on Aging and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

Johns and her colleagues found that all adults with MCI they tested were impaired in at least one executive function and almost half performed poorly in all executive function tests. This is in sharp contrast with standard screening tests and clinical interviews, which detected impairments in only 15 per cent of those with MCI.

Executive function deficits affect a person's everyday life and their ability to plan and organize their activities. Even something as easy as running errands and figuring out whether to go to the drycleaners or to the supermarket can be difficult for adults with MCI. Detecting these problems early could improve patient care and treatment planning. ■

—Luciana Gravotta

EARN A CREDIT CERTIFICATE IN

- MARKETING
- HUMAN RESOURCES
- BUSINESS PRACTICES
- ENTREPRENEURSHIP



- I want the business career of my dreams.
- I want flexibility to take courses online or at night.
- I want skills I can use immediately.
- I want state-of-the-art business skills so I can earn that promotion.
- I want to start and manage my own business successfully.

Concordia University's School of Extended Learning

makes university possible. Join people like you seeking a more successful, fulfilling career and upgrading those essential skills. These credit courses are taught by experienced professors with relevant industry credentials, in class and online.

universityispossible.ca

For more information: 514-848-8600 or extendedlearning@concordia.ca



We make university possible.

UNDERSTANDING ACCENTS

With immigration on the rise, the use of English as a second language is sweeping the world. People who have grown up speaking French, Italian, Mandarin or any other language are now expected to be able to communicate effectively using this new lingua franca. How understandable are they in this second language?

Instead of assuming that someone who sounds different is not communicating effectively, we need to listen beyond the accent, say Pavel Trofimovich, Concordia educational psychology and applied linguistics assistant professor, and his University of Bristol colleague, Talia Isaacs. Their work tackles the tricky question of what distinguishes accented speech from speech that is difficult to understand. Their results show that accent and comprehensibility are overlapping yet distinct dimensions.



In their article published in *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, the team treats comprehensibility as one aspect of being successful at communicating in a second language. They show that producing comprehensible speech is more than simply a matter of proper pronunciation.

The researchers audio-recorded 40 adults whose first language is French, explaining a picture sequence in English. Their narratives were then played back to 60 novice raters and

three experienced teachers of English as a second language.

The listeners rated each narrative separately for comprehensibility and "accentedness." Their scoring was then examined in relation to 19 measures, derived through independent analyses of the speech, including word stress, pitch, grammatical errors and fluency. Finally, statistical associations were examined in conjunction with teacher comments on the linguistic influences on their ratings. ■

— Cléa Desjardins

CONCORDIA GETS HIGH MARKS IN RANKINGS

A new report by Toronto-based Higher Education Strategy Associates (HESA) suggests Concordia's efforts to strengthen its national research standing are paying off. The university ranks ninth in the country in social sciences and humanities and 20th in natural sciences and engineering.

Measuring Academic Research in Canada: Field-Normalized University Rankings 2012 attempts to remove biases and paint a more nuanced and accurate picture of the nation's academic research landscape.

HESA arrived at its rankings by measuring researchers' productivity, impact and granting-council monies. As a result, academics are judged against the norms of their own disciplines rather than the apples-to-oranges comparisons inherent in traditional rankings. HESA gauges each institution's "academic capital" through a new set of metrics. They used a bibliometric measure in combination with a proprietary database they



developed to correct for biases. Universities with strengths in a handful of disciplines that enjoy strong publication and citation cultures — such as physics and life sciences — don't get a disproportionate boost in the rankings.

Another Concordia program, the John Molson MBA, offered by John Molson School of Business, was ranked third in Canada and 78th in the world by *The Economist* in its 2012 "Which MBA?" survey. The program moved up two spots from its global position in last year's survey.

The ranking evaluates full-time MBA programs around the world to assess what students find vital: career opportunities, personal development, educational experience, and earning and networking potential.

The university also recently gained a spot in the 100 new (under 50 years old) universities in the world by the Britain's *Times Higher Education*. ■

— Sypro Rondos and Yuri Mytko

GOOGLE LAUNCHES CONCORDIA STREET VIEWS

The Concordia campus community was buzzing one year ago with talk of a pedal-driven, three-wheeled contraption touring the streets and training mysterious lenses on our buildings.

To set minds at ease, Concordia reported at the time that the Google Trike was simply conducting an updated visual survey of both campuses. It also reported that the images would be posted in about a year on Google Street Views, which are available on Google Maps.

The wait is over, and now the Concordia community at home and abroad can take a virtual campus tour using its computers and other digital devices. It's the most up-close and detailed view of the university. Older street views were taken during construction in 2009 and so didn't show an accurate picture of the downtown campus.

Among the reasons Google set its trikes loose on dozens of university campuses around the world is that these smaller machines are able to penetrate spaces inaccessible to Google cars, such as the quadrangle on the Loyola Campus.

Equipped with nine lenses pointing in every horizontal direction, the Google Street View Trike gathers a series of slightly overlapping images as its operator pedals along. These images are later digitally stitched together to produce a 360-degree panorama.

Future Google Street Views will include 360-degree panoramas of some of these buildings' impressive interiors, which were also captured last year.

Google's refreshed views of the Concordia campus are part of an international project to upgrade Street Views of campuses across Canada, the United States, Brazil, Spain, France, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Israel, Japan and Taiwan. ■

—Spyro Rondos



Centre for
Human Relations
& Community Studies

in collaboration with



Concordia University

John Molson
School of Business

Executive Centre

presents

TEAM COACHING: PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT

for leaders, executives,
project managers, HR and
OD professionals, business
coaches and consultants

FOUR DAYS of
Training and Mentoring
April 24-27, 2013

LEARN what teams
need to propel themselves
forward on enduring paths
of excellence.

DEVELOP foundational
competencies for team
coaching applications in
your professional world.

APPRECIATE how to
maximize the profound
potential of team dynamics
for organizational growth.

Offered in English

Participation fee: \$1,195

Tuition, materials,
refreshments and
taxes included

Only \$1,095 if paid before
February 1, 2013

REGISTER ONLINE:
[coaching.concordia.ca/
teams](http://coaching.concordia.ca/teams)

Registration Code: **JMEC**



NEW BOARD CHAIR LOOKS FORWARD, NOT BACK

Norman Hébert Jr., BComm 77, brings expertise and love of his alma mater to his role as Concordia's new chair of the Board of Governors

BY JAKE BRENNAN

To rise to the top, a successful golfer must put his or her head down, focus on the basics and remain consistent. Recognizing that requires maturity, execution and experience.

It is precisely these qualities Concordia sought and found in Norman Hébert Jr., BComm 77, who stepped into the position of chair of the university's Board of Governors for a three-year term on July 1. He joined the board in 2008. Hébert, long-time president and chief executive officer of Montreal-area car dealership Groupe Park Avenue Inc., arrives with extensive business and board management experience.

While at Concordia in the 1970s, his father, Norman Hébert Sr., headed the successful Park Avenue Chevrolet, a dealership he started in 1959. Yet it



THOMAS KÖNIGSTHAL JR.

NORMAN HÉBERT JR., CHAIR OF CONCORDIA'S BOARD OF GOVERNORS.

wasn't until Hébert Jr. ran the 1976 Loyola Winter Carnival that the business bug bit him. "I had to build and motivate a team," he recalls from his Brossard office. "Everybody had their own responsibilities, but I was the cheerleader and orchestra conductor. That really gave me a great sense of satisfaction, and I saw I had some skills there."

After completing his business studies at Concordia and earning a law degree from the University of Ottawa, Hébert joined the family business in 1981, skillfully expanding it tenfold over the next three decades. For his hard work and integrity, Groupe Park Avenue was voted one of the 50 Best Managed Canadian Companies in 1999 and Hébert received Ernst & Young's Entrepreneur of the Year Award in 2003.

Concordia tried to recruit him to its board early in the new millennium.

However, with his plate overfull, Hébert had to decline. "I knew full well that at some point I'd come back and serve," he reveals.

Even then, Hébert knew he wanted to give back to his alma mater. Therefore he created his own opportunity to do so by merging two of his passions. An avid golfer — his handicap is a decent 13 and his wife, Diane Dunlop-Hébert, BComm 82, is president of Golf Canada — he naturally turned to the links. Hébert helped start the annual Concordia Golf Classic. Since its inception in 2004, the tournament has raised \$3.2 million and helped create more than 1,000 bursaries to ease the financial pressure on students as they pursue their academic goals. "Accessibility is so critical," he says. Four years ago, Liliane Chamas, BSc 09, a Belarusian immigrant whose Golf Classic bursary allowed her to attend Concordia and then go on to become a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University, came to the event to thank participants. "There wasn't a dry eye in the place," Hébert recalls.

BOARD EXPERIENCE

Hébert's business acumen and steady hand have been sought for governance by crown corporations. A former member of Hydro-Québec's board, Hébert currently is in his second mandate as chair of the Société des alcools du Québec's board of directors. With many fewer constituencies represented, those boards are a different beast than Concordia's, he explains. Still, the role of chair remains similar, he adds, "to



NORMAN HÉBERT JR., LEFT, WITH FELLOW MEMBERS OF THE 1976-77 LOYOLA STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVE: (FROM LEFT, FRONT ROW) ROSEMARY MAILAS, PAUL LEBLANC, RUTH MORRISON AND ROSALIE PARSONS; (MIDDLE ROW) CHRIS MOTA, RAYMOND LAFONTAINE AND DAVE THACKRAY; (BACK) SIG WYSOLMERSKI.

align everybody in the same direction," ensuring all members understand they are there to support the president and can best do so by contributing their varied viewpoints.

So far, Hébert's approach is working. "Our first board meeting [September 28] was very positive," he reports. The smaller size — 25 voting members rather than 40 members — helps. "Most importantly, we have a new president, who is a leader and also somebody who inspires — that came across clearly," Hébert says of Alan Shepard. "He seems to have boundless energy, and that's contagious, not only on the board but on campus, too."

Calling Shepard "CEO and spokesperson for the university," Hébert says they meet most weeks and speak every few

days. From experience, he knows the other board members can recognize if the chair and the president are in sync. "That goes a long way toward creating a more productive board," he says.

Hébert is further encouraging engagement by extending his conscious relationship-building efforts across the board. He plans to meet each member individually before the year's end. "That's a crucial step toward making board meetings both constructive and transparent," he says. "There will always be issues, but I know we can deal with them in a mature and open way, getting everybody's feedback."

That's just the kind of steady approach that will lead Concordia consistently down fairways and onto greens, getting it in position to ace most of its opportunities. ■

NEW FACES ON CONCORDIA'S BOARD OF GOVERNORS

The Board of Governors is Concordia's senior governing body and is responsible for establishing its legal and administrative framework. Beginning in 2012-13, the board reduced its voting members from 40 to 25, based on the recommendation of the External Governance Review Committee report released in 2011. The 2012-13 board added three first-time members: Jeff Bicher, BA 02, Antoinette Bozac, BA 78, and Mélanie La Couture.

JEFF BICHER, BA 02



JOE DRESNER

Since 2008, Jeff Bicher has served as CEO and executive director for Hillel Montreal, a campus-based organization serving more than 7,000 Jewish students at four universities and five colleges in Montreal. Bicher brings to Concordia's board his extensive experience as a volunteer administrator. Most notably, he chaired the Community Organizations Planning and Allocations Committee and Executive Directors' Council at Federation CJA, and the Agency Staff Division of the Combined Jewish Appeal. He is now treasurer of the Concordia University Alumni Association. Bicher received a Certified Fund Raising Executive designation in 2007.

ANTOINETTE BOZAC, BA 78



Antoinette Bozac has had an impressive legal career over the past 25 years, rising through a series of Canadian and international companies including Domtar, Imperial Oil, Aventis Pasteur and Unisource Canada. Her most recent position was at Canada Lands Company, a self-financing crown corporation, where she was chief legal officer, vice-president of Corporate Affairs, head of Public Affairs and official spokesperson. Bozac has sat on a number of boards and committees for not-for-profit associations, including York Central Hospital, Toronto Philharmonia, YMCA Montreal and the Montreal Board of Trade.

MÉLANIE LA COUTURE



After earning a BEng from Montreal's École Polytechnique and an MBA from the University of Western Ontario's Richard Ivey School of Business, Mélanie La Couture spent four years in consulting at Deloitte and PricewaterhouseCoopers. For the past decade, she has been with the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal (OSM), starting as manager of its endowment fund and, since 2007, serving as its chief operating officer. She also helped the OSM implement a new governance model. La Couture brings to Concordia a spirit of collaboration derived from her 15 years of experience working in general management and organizational effectiveness. ■

WHY I HIRE CO-OP STUDENTS

"Co-op is a smart way to fill staff shortages and preview potential employees. I know because I did my first co-op work term at Medisca Pharmaceutique Inc. in 2001. Now I hire skilled, up-to-date science, business and engineering co-op students to help during peak workloads and support special projects. Co-op really works for Medisca. Let co-op work for you."

—Jennifer Pinsky, BComm 04,
Concordia University, Institute for
Co-operative Education
Human Resources Manager,
Medisca Pharmaceutique Inc.



co-op.concordia.ca

INSTITUTE FOR
CO-OPERATIVE EDUCATION

Creating enriched educational
experiences since 1980

514-848-2424, ext. 3950

coopinstitute@concordia.ca

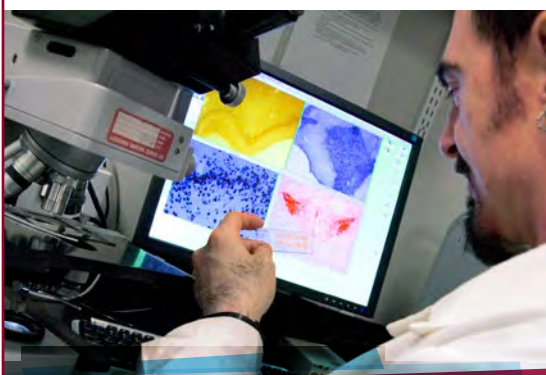


Institute for
Co-operative Education

DON'T MISS THE
**Concordia University
Globe and Mail
National Conversation Series on AGING WELL**

Join us on February 7, 2013, for the first of a four-part series
moderated by the *Globe and Mail's* André Picard.

SEXUAL DESIRE AND THE EFFECT OF NEUROCHEMICALS ON BEHAVIOUR



A CONVERSATION BETWEEN

Naomi Wolf

and professor

Jim Pfaus

Thursday, February 7, 2013, 7 p.m.

D.B. Clarke Theatre, 1455 De Maisonneuve Blvd. W., Montreal, Que.

To reserve your seat, register online: concordia.ca/globeandmail-series

Tickets are free of charge but reservations are required.

Stay tuned to the *Accent* and *NOW* newsletters for the dates and topics
of the next three conversations in March, April and May 2013.

BE PART OF THE THINKING

CONCORDIA.CA





DECK THE MALL\$

With the holiday season upon us, Concordia experts tackle the challenge of the commercialization of major religions

By Louise Morgan, GrDip 99

It's easy to get caught up in the frenzy of the holiday season.

The day after Halloween, the bombardment begins. Ads featuring Santa Claus take over the airwaves. "Deck the Halls" rings through the malls. Suburban lawns get cluttered with inflatable snow globes and plastic reindeer. All in anticipation of a silent night, which is anything but – with celebrations and excess – for many Christians in Canada. The commercialization of Christmas and other holidays has reached new heights.

Yet it was Dr. Seuss's famous storybook character, the Grinch, who tried to steal Christmas

by taking away the presents, decorations and holiday feast – only to realize the joy of the season lives in people's hearts: "Maybe Christmas, he thought, doesn't come from a store, maybe Christmas perhaps means a little bit more."

As many of us get swept up in a whirlwind of holiday parties, shopping for the perfect gift and decorating our homes, we stress out in the process. Have we forgotten the true meaning of the holidays with the commercialization of society and all become Grinches?

Concordia experts consider the impact of commerce on the major religions' holiday traditions.

HURRAY FOR SANTA?

“It’s true that the commercialization of Christmas is increasing, but people forget that the modern Christmas is not at its roots a religious event. Its popularity was manufactured both by big business and religious groups,” says Jean-Philippe Warren, Concordia University Research Chair on the Study of Quebec and an associate professor of sociology and anthropology.

“People complain today that we’re spoiling children, spending on things we don’t need, loading our credit cards with debt and getting stressed lining up to buy things — all for a few hours of joy. This is not new! A hundred years ago, the level of commercialization was already thought to be overwhelming and morally wrong,” says Warren, author of *Hourra pour Santa Claus!* (Boréal), a book that explores the commercialization of the holiday season in Quebec from 1885 to 1915.

Warren relates that in mid-19th-century Quebec, Christmas was just one of more than 200 annual religious celebrations. In the midst of the industrial revolution, Canadians increasingly found themselves working in factories. Since the manufacturing cycle couldn’t stop every few days for a celebration, the number of compulsory holidays dropped drastically by the end of the 19th century. “Traditionally, for Christians at the time, the big celebration was Easter and for French Canadians it was New Year’s Eve. Christmas stood in the shadow of those two holidays, but through a convergence of forces it became the dominant celebration of the year,” says Warren. “It was hijacked by big business and to a lesser extent the Church.”

Religious groups particularly in Quebec discouraged the celebration of New Year’s Eve because it was a



RADU DIACONU

JEAN-PHILIPPE WARREN

The solution was to reappropriate Christmas and connect commercial interests with Christian values.

pagan holiday and often led to immoral practices. “Sometimes the drunken debauchery went on for two weeks!” Warren reports.

Yet it’s the hand of business interests that was strongest. “The dominant ideology pushed people to work hard and amass as much money as they could, never spending a dime on unnecessary things. So there’s a problem — you’re producing goods but there’s no market to buy them,” explains Warren. “The solution was to reappropriate Christmas and connect commercial interests with Christian values — generosity and compassion — making it the biggest day of the year and the only day when conspicuous consumption was condoned.”

Christmas was wrapped up as a religious celebration on the outside, although in practice revolved around materialism. “Even 100 years ago, written records show Christians prepared a month in advance — not by saying

their prayers or singing in church but by focusing on material things: the gifts, the tree, greeting cards, the yule log — and Santa Claus. What is he doing there? Why is it not about Jesus Christ?” asks Warren.

“In trying to replace New Year’s Eve as the central celebration of French Canadians, Roman Catholic priests made a deal with the devil, so to speak, and collaborated with big business to promote Christmas. They didn’t exactly lose, but the commercial aspects of Christmas have always, since the end of the 19th century, overwhelmed the religious ones.”



RETAILERS AND CONSUMERS UNDER PRESSURE

The Bank of Montreal's annual holiday spending outlook for 2012 reports that this holiday season Canadians are expected to spend \$1,610 each — on gifts, entertaining, travel and other expenses — and the very survival of many retailers depends on it.

"More than 40 per cent of retail sales are generated in the fourth quarter, from September to January, so retailers really focus on this time of year," says Robert Soroka, MBA 88, who teaches marketing at Concordia's John Molson School of Business and School of Extended Learning, McGill University's Desautels Faculty of Management and Montreal's Dawson College.

Over the last 20 years, consumers have benefited from an evolution in holiday discounting that stems from the recession of the early 1990s. "Reductions in sales caused panic among retailers, who began dropping prices before Boxing Day. That trend has since continued and we see a lot of deep discounting before Christmas," Soroka says. With the arrival of competitors like Walmart and dollar stores, retailers have had to offer more price breaks and have seen a cut in profit margins.



ROBERT SOROKA

Retailers remind us that this gift would be great for Uncle Joe and that one for Grandma, but things can easily get out of hand.

Customers, too, have been challenged. "Retailers remind us that this gift would be great for Uncle Joe and that one for Grandma, but things can easily get out of hand. Where there's an emotional element, like at Christmas, Valentine's Day or Mother's Day, there's the desire to buy to recognize someone close to you," Soroka says. "Those strong emotions require consumers to exhibit discipline and some ground rules within the family, possibly dictating a limit of one gift per person. Secret Santa exchanges, where people draw a name from a hat and buy only for that person, help to control holiday spending." He adds: "With advertising, in-store fixtures, holiday music and decorations inciting them, consumers may be inclined to buy more than they can afford."

Canadians' debt is on the rise. The average household now has just 63 cents of disposable income for every dollar of debt, according to Statistics Canada,

which is the country's highest-ever debt-to-income ratio. "It's easy to buy when you're continually reminded, 'Hey, it's Christmas after all.' But you get a sharp reality check when the bill comes in January," says Soroka.

He points out that not every purchase is a good idea. Therefore the ability to return those items is important. His tip to habitually remorseful buyers: "Shop at stores that have liberal return policies and remember that even where policies are stricter, it's worth talking to the store manager before making the purchase. They may relax the policy to capture the sale, since they know if they don't, somebody else will."

There is nothing that obliges Quebec retailers to take back a purchase unless they have an explicit return policy, or if the item has a latent or non-observable and undisclosed defect. In other words, you may want to think twice before you buy that 72-inch LED TV.



THE TRUE MEANING OF CHRISTIAN HOLIDAYS



“There’s an interesting contrast between Christmas celebrations across the continents. In North America, it’s very commercial, but quite different when you look at Europe,” says Concordia associate professor of theological studies and religion André Gagné.

He spent a year in Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium, with his family in 2004-05. “Christmas, as we experienced it there, was so surprising. There was no shopping spree, a few modest decorations, everything was very sober and the emphasis was on the significance of the Christian tradition,” Gagné recalls. “It gave people time to reflect on the meaning of their tradition. The same goes for Easter. There were no bunnies or chocolates. It was all about commemorating the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

Eclipsed by the glitz of Christmas in North America, Easter is actually the most theologically important Christian holiday. Yet many North American Christians, especially young people, don’t realize its religious meaning.

According to Christian belief, God sent his son Jesus Christ to live among the people and show them the way at a time when humankind had forgotten about God and the ultimate reality beyond earthly life. “While Christmas marks the coming of Jesus into the world to save humanity, Easter commemorates the significance of his death and resurrection. In trying to make sense of Jesus’ violent death on the cross — a fate normally reserved for criminals — Christians reappropriated the idea of sacrifice. The Christian story builds on the Hebrew Bible tradition whereby sins were remitted through an animal sacrifice and the shedding of its blood,” says Gagné.



ANDRÉ GAGNÉ

Traditionally Christians pray to God,
and now the omniscient Santa Claus figure
— who knows if you’ve been naughty or nice —
appears to have replaced God.

He explains that Christians saw Jesus’ death as the ultimate sacrifice rather than a gruesome defeat. “God offered his own son, making Jesus the Lamb of God, to remit all sin and save mankind. The idea is that all who embrace this truth are saved. Christ’s resurrection from the dead is taken as proof that God accepted Jesus’ death in remittance for the sins of humankind. In church, the Eucharist is distributed as a symbol of his body and the wine of his blood — we are very far from bunnies and chocolate.”

Gagné believes commercialization dilutes the meaning of holy days. “People have literally forgotten their significance. Traditionally Christians pray to God, and now the omniscient Santa Claus figure — who knows if you’ve been naughty or nice — appears to have replaced God.”

When Gagné teaches biblical literature in his religion and theology classes, it no longer surprises him that many of the students are hearing for the first time about the birth narrative of Jesus in the gospels of Matthew and Luke or the theological significance of Christ’s death.

Not everyone who celebrates Christmas or Easter as a cultural holiday need share all the beliefs, Gagné maintains, but it’s worthwhile to try to understand why these holidays were powerful at a certain time.

TRUE TO ITS MUSLIM ROOTS

The Muslim community counts 1.5 billion people around the world. Roksana Bahramitash, who did her post-doctoral studies at Concordia's Simone de Beauvoir Institute and is an expert on women in the Muslim world, is quick to point out that practices vary widely across different households and corners of the Muslim world, from Iran to Indonesia, Trinidad to sub-Saharan Africa.

A native of Iran, Bahramitash describes the Persian new year, Norooz, as the biggest holiday in her home country. Distinct from the Islamic new year, Norooz marks the spring equinox and dates back to pre-Islamic culture and the Zoroastrian tradition. "In Iran, it's a gift-giving celebration and a bit of a shopping bonanza, but very different from my experience of Christmas, which I find can be a little overwhelming," she says. "Older people give gifts — sometimes in cash and sometimes only a small, symbolic amount — to younger people as a form of *baraket* or blessing for a prosperous year to come."

Bahramitash does see some traditional shifts. "A rising Islamic middle class, particularly in the Persian Gulf and all the way from Indonesia to central Anatolia,



LOUISE MORGAN

ROKSANA BAHRAMITASH

In Iran, it's a gift-giving celebration and a bit of a shopping bonanza, but very different from my experience of Christmas, which I find can be a little overwhelming.

is developing a taste for consumerism, inspired by satellite television and Western-style consumerism, which also manifest around the holidays. For example, there are concerts around Milad E Nabi, a holiday that marks the birth of the prophet, and sales attached to it," she says.

The two major religious holidays that dominate the Islamic calendar remain true to their religious roots. Eid Al-Fitr

marks the end of Ramadan, a month of fasting, prayer and charity. "The tradition is to wear something new. It could be a scarf or gloves — at least in Iran — something new just to celebrate, but there is no exchange of presents," Bahramitash explains. "A charity tax is also collected by mosques or clerical leaders — mandatory through religious affiliation but not through the legal system — which is directed toward poverty alleviation."

Eid Al-Adha, the feast of the sacrifice, is celebrated at the end of Hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. Muslims usually sacrifice a sheep and share the meat with family, friends and the poor. The tradition derives from the story of Abraham, who sacrificed a lamb instead of his son Ismail. As an Abrahamic religion, Muslims also celebrate the births of Jesus and Moses.



NEW FOCUS FOR AN OLD HOLIDAY

Possibly the best-known Jewish holiday among non-Jews is Hanukkah, the festival of lights, because it typically falls just before Christmas. A lower-level religious holiday, Hanukkah commemorates the victory of the Jews over their Greek oppressors in the second century BCE (before the Common Era). A small amount of ritual oil is said to have burned miraculously for eight days, long enough for the Jews to rededicate their temple that had been won back from the Greeks.

"The focus of celebration traditionally has been on lighting the eight candles of the menorah [candelabrum] and telling the story to children, but with the commercialization of Christmas, Hanukkah has taken on an exploding gift-giving character that it never used to have," says Norman Ravvin, Concordia associate professor in the Department of Religion. "Since Hanukkah lasts eight nights, Jewish kids have suddenly hit the jackpot. It's become the season of spending money and receiving gifts. That's the struggle: we have to remember to focus on the story and the candle lighting."

Until 35 or 40 years ago, Hanukkah wasn't so focused on gift-giving. "There was a feeling among Jewish kids that they were somehow different and left out," he says of those living in Christian societies. In the late 1960s and early '70s, some Jews even started bringing "Hanukkah bushes" — their version of Christmas trees — into their homes. "It's more of an American tendency and I've never actually seen one myself, but there was an early signal that Hanukkah was trying to behave like Christmas. The convergence reflects the urge of a minority community wanting to be like other people," he says.



NORMAN RAVVIN

With the commercialization of Christmas, Hanukkah has taken on an exploding gift-giving character.

Moving in the opposite direction, an increase in modern orthodoxy in Canada and the United States over the last 10 to 15 years has created new markets for Jewish products, including kosher foods and holiday-related books for young people. "These books, which could be presented graphically or in more academic form, are aimed at religious people and tell the stories of the holidays," says Ravvin. His children receive the books as gifts from American family members.

The eight-day springtime holiday of Passover celebrates the exodus from Egypt. Jews gather the first two Passover evenings for a ritual meal called the Seder. During the holiday they are prohibited from eating leavened bread and a number of other specific foods.

With the availability of prepared foods today, a whole new market blossomed for Kosher for Passover fare such as dairy-free ice cream and a multitude of

cookies and cakes. While these are very convenient, old-world Jews, like Ravvin's very observant Polish grandmother, could never have conceived of them. "She lived just fine within a religious context without all that, but I can't judge how we ought to do it," he says.

The two most significant Jewish religious holidays, Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish new year, and Yom Kippur, the day of atonement, haven't yet steered into overt commercialization. "They hold incredible ritual and community value and even non-observant Jews tend to celebrate these high holidays," says Ravvin.

SWEET HINDU TRADITIONS



Looking at the Hindu tradition, particularly in India, commercialization of certain holidays is evident in the giving of elaborate gifts by those with the economic means. Other important holiday celebrations are restricted to religious ritual, or puja.

Diwali, or the festival of lights, marks a change in season and celebrates the legend of Rama, who returns home after defeating the demon king Ravana to find his kingdom filled with candles, signifying the triumph of good over evil.

Modern-day celebrations are characterized by decorating the home with candles, families coming together, social gatherings and festivals. "Traditionally people would exchange sweets, or desserts. You might get yourself a new garment. Since it's such an auspicious time of year, this is also when people would do an annual cleanup, paint their house — or even move into a new house," explains Shital Sharma, a lecturer in Concordia's Department of Religion.

Now, in addition to exchanging sweets, celebrants also give more expensive gifts like jewellery. Usually the elder family members would give to the younger ones.

The Indian festival of Raksha-bandhan, which means string of protection, celebrates the bond between brothers and sisters. The sister will tie a protective string around her brother's wrist and, in return, the brother will give her a gift. "Traditionally, a simple silk or cotton thread would suffice, but now you can buy string with 24-karat gold threads or diamonds," says Sharma.

Since India's trade liberalization policies opened markets in the early 1990s, Western goods began streaming



LOUISE MORGAN

The idea that the sacred should be completely untouched by material culture I think is very idealistic.

into India. "Traditionally, gold would have been given as a gift showing status, whereas now you might give a Louis Vuitton purse as a gift or a Porsche, BMW or the latest flat-screen TV!" she says.

Religious celebrations have also been influenced by pop culture, she contends. "People watch soap operas and Bollywood films and see the clothes they're wearing, the jewellery, the types of ritual objects they're using — and those are the types of things that will be sold in the market."

Religious paraphernalia and ritual objects have become commodities available in stores. Through industrialization and mass production, today statues might be made outside of India rather than through a hereditary lineage of artists. "If I choose to put it in my shrine or a temple, a mass-produced object becomes a sacred object. If religious objects can be commodified,

why can't commodities be resignified and brought within the religious sphere?" Sharma asks. "The idea that the sacred should be completely isolated and untouched by material culture I think is a very idealistic way of talking about religious celebration."

She adds that religious holidays in all cultures involve community building and social interaction with family members at churches or temples. "It's marked now by the exchange of commodities," Sharma says. "I don't think it dilutes the religious significance. Historically, kings or wealthy merchants and landowners would display status with lavish celebrations. I think it's always been a marker of status, except now it's open to everyone." ■

WELCOME TO THE FAMILY



The Concordia University Alumni Association lets you:

- Keep in touch with fellow alumni
- Enjoy exciting programs and activities
- Take advantage of special benefits and savings

Find out more: concordia.ca/alumni

Email: alumni@concordia.ca
Phone: **514-848-2424, ext. 4856**
Toll-free: **1-888-777-3330**

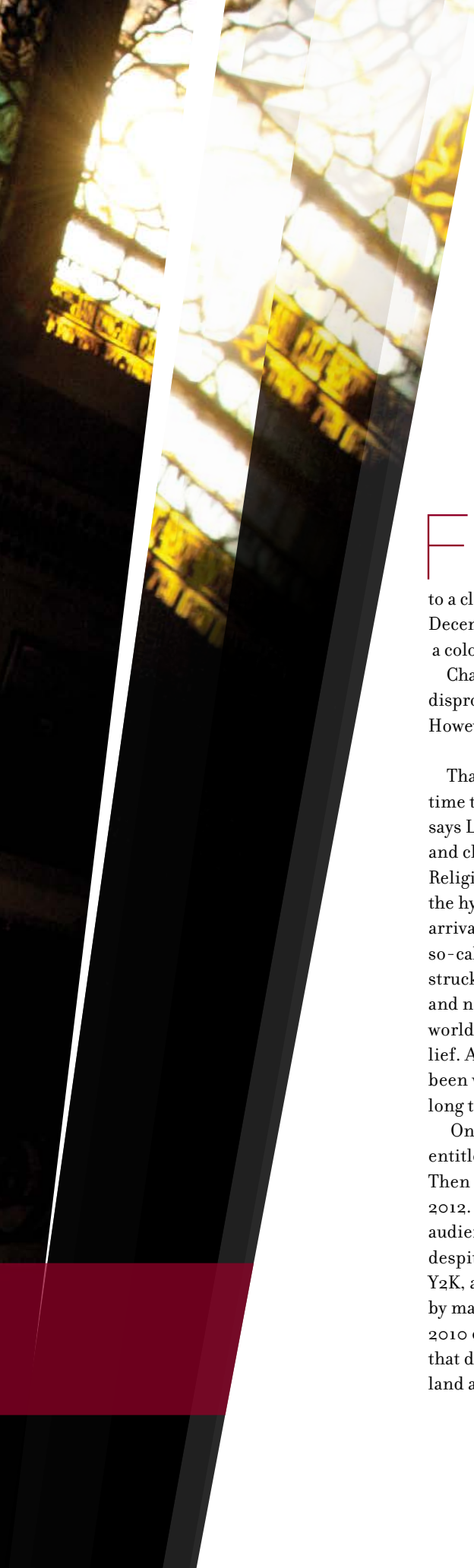
A portrait of Lorenzo DiTommaso, a man with glasses and a dark suit, looking directly at the camera. He is standing in front of a wall with a stained glass window and a plaque. The lighting is dramatic, with strong shadows.

Apocalypticism expert and
Concordia professor of
religion Lorenzo DiTommaso
sheds light – and a dose
of reality – on the darkest
cataclysmic scenarios

BY PALOMA FRIEDMAN
PHOTOS BY
LINDA RUTENBERG

IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT

(OR IS IT?)



F iery explosions, surging tidal waves, massive loss of life. And maybe a few zombies, too. It's the stuff of action thrillers starring daring heroes and, for some of us, our worst fears for the end of this year. As 2012 comes to a close, some people are nervously watching the calendar creep ever closer to December 21. That's the date some believe the ancient Mayan calendar predicts a colossal disaster and the end of the world.

Chances are, by the time this article is read, this prediction will be proven or disproved. If it's the former, it will certainly be unfortunate for all humankind. However, given past apocalyptic forecasts, don't bet on it.

That's because this is not the first time the apocalypse has been called for, says Lorenzo DiTommaso, a professor and chair of Concordia's Department of Religion and apocalypse expert. Recall the hysteria and fear surrounding the arrival of the past millennium — the so-called "Y2K" bug. When the clock struck midnight on January 1, 2000, and nothing catastrophic occurred, the world breathed a collective sigh of relief. According to DiTommaso, we have been waiting for the apocalypse for a long time.

On October 3, he delivered a talk entitled "The Last Lecture? Apocalypse Then and Now" as part of Homecoming 2012. To a packed and enthralled audience of 260, DiTommaso said that despite inaccurate predictions like Y2K, apocalyptic fears are still stoked by massive natural disasters such as the 2010 earthquake in Fukushima, Japan, that devastated a large swath of land and killed thousands of people.

In order to make sense of these tragedies, we put events like these into a larger conceptual framework to understand the workings of the world and all the other things we can't easily grasp, like the nature of time, space and death.

Since arriving at Concordia in 2004, DiTommaso has looked at apocalypses in all forms; on the bookshelves in his office, graphic novels and Japanese manga comics sit next to books on the Dead Sea Scrolls and medieval theological texts. He believes that one thing is common to all apocalyptic forecasting, from biblical and medieval prophecies to modern day interpretations: it's not just the expectation for the end of the world, but a larger, apocalyptic world view. "Apocalypticism is the mortar that binds these devastating events together and creates a meaningful philosophic structure that is at once comprehensive, comprehensible and internally consistent," he says.

THE ORIGINS OF THE END

Throughout the ages, apocalypticism has varied in intensity. Dating back about 23 centuries, to the origins of the world view in early Judaism, DiTommaso says, “when we chart the frequency of apocalyptic speculation over these 2,000-plus years, we quickly notice that the trajectory displays more of a peak-and-valley profile than a steady-state one.” One early peak was in the period from the second century BCE (before the Common Era) to the first century CE (Common Era). It was the period that the classical biblical apocalypses of Daniel and the Revelation to John were composed, along with dozens of lesser-known apocalyptic texts such as *The Book of the Watchers*, *The Animal Apocalypse* and *The War Scroll* that were discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls.

At the same time, there came a rise in messianism — a belief in a redemp-

sky and the dead emerging from their graves. Though at least three of these disasters sound remotely possible in our era of shaky plate tectonics, climate change and avian flu, DiTommaso is quick to note that in the context of apocalypticism they become “supernatural” — ascribed a value beyond human understanding.

MYTHBUSTING THE APOCALYPSE

Not all apocalypses foresee a supernatural doomsday scenario or the advent of a messianic saviour. These were two of the myths DiTommaso dispelled in his Homecoming lecture. Another was that all apocalypses are harbingers of the negative. For example, some interpret the 2012 Mayan prophecy as the coming of a new, positive age in which justice and salvation prevail, or that ushers in a new era of human consciousness.

and while the end of the Long Count occurs in 2012, the precise end date is disputed.

In the 1970s and '80s, a group of cranks got hold of the Mayan calendar and imposed an apocalyptic valence on it. They unravelled its circular concept of time, making it linear. They also made assumptions, as the Maya did, based on the motion of the celestial bodies in the sky, although these assumptions presume certain planetary measurements. “The calendar’s accuracy was restricted to the precision of human observation,” DiTommaso says. “In other words, assume one measurement, get one date. Assume another, get another date.” December 21 is a common consensus, not a scientific fact.

In addition to the myths about apocalypticism, DiTommaso put forth five aspects that characterize it in all its

Apocalypticism
is an adolescent
world view, and it
is time to grow up.



tive, end-time figure that will restore good to the world for all eternity. In the Christian tradition, this figure is Jesus, whose “second coming” is anticipated by believers.

In the Middle Ages, fears of a coming apocalypse recurred. In the sixteenth century, *The Fifteen Signs of Doomsday* was an immensely popular text. Among the signs: mountains flattening, sea levels rising, birds falling out of the

Another major misconception about apocalypses surrounds the one we are currently anticipating: that the Maya believe the world will end on December 21. In fact, whereas the apocalyptic concept of time is linear — that is, it has a beginning and moves steadily in one direction — the Meso-American calendar that the Maya follow is cyclical. One of their cycles is called the Long Count, which lasts 5,126 years,

forms. The first is that our world is ordered by “two irreducible and mutually antagonistic forces, most often labelled as ‘good’ and ‘evil.’” The next is that in addition to our everyday existence, “there is a transcendental reality — the veritable one, to which our own world is subordinate and transient.” Most often, this divine reality is known as “god” or “heaven.” Indeed, DiTommaso explains that the term “apocalypse”

comes from the Greek word *apocalypsis*, which means an “unveiling,” and by extension, “revelation.” In a sense, a transcendental reality is being unveiled. “It’s as though we have a curtain behind us, and there is another world behind it, whose reality is the true reality.”

Third, apocalypticism proposes that our world is so bad that the only way out is to restore it supernaturally — to sweep it away. Fourth, in this new world will be found justice, salvation, retribution and vindication, or whatever is felt to be missing now. Fifth, our primary task in this life is to uncover and understand the truths about space and time. “Ultimately, we must prepare for the imminent dissolution of the present reality,” DiTommaso says. These factors amount to apocalypticism’s “tremendous conceptual scope and almost infinite applicability” and explain why it has endured for as long as it has.

APOCALYPSE NOW

One might think that with the triumph of the scientific world view — life-saving vaccines, gravity-defying airplanes and the rest — humankind would have shed the ancient apocalyptic mindset. Not so, DiTommaso reveals. Not only does apocalypticism persist, it thrives. “We live in the Age of the Apocalypse,” he says. It pervades popular culture, in comics, novels, music, role-playing games, and in Hollywood blockbusters like *2012* and *Avatar*, which depict apocalyptic or post-apocalyptic worlds and the massive devastation associated with it.

What distinguishes today’s apocalyptic beliefs from those of the past is their source: in our interconnected, secularized and globalized lives, we see many more predictions in the “bottom-up” sense. Unlike earlier doomsday forecasts, which were driven by a reigning leader in a “top-down” manner, DiTommaso calls the 2012 Mayan

prophecy “the first public apocalypse.” With the ubiquity of the internet, “apocalyptic conjecture can be instantaneously uploaded to freely accessible websites, blogs and social media.”

Our modern era has also seen the emergence of a new, secular apocalypticism not based in religious belief. DiTommaso, an atheist, refuses to ascribe any role to supernaturalism. “There’s a lot I don’t understand, but a supernatural explanation doesn’t help me understand it,” he says.

DiTommaso believes in a different kind of apocalypse that is already taking place before our very eyes. In his view, environmental degradation is a more serious concern and we will see widespread loss of biodiversity and mass extinctions before we see a sudden, supernatural catastrophe described by people claiming to be prophets. DiTommaso may not practise in the religious sense, yet he practises what he preaches in the secular sense: he and his wife Diane are vegans and environmentalists, doing their part to prevent what he calls the real apocalypse. “Apocalypticism is an adolescent world view. It understands the world in terms of black and white and assumes that history — and its end — is governed by a supernatural agency. In this way, it places responsibility for the future on someone or something else than ourselves. It is time to grow up,” he says.

Concordia geography, planning and environment professor and climate science expert Damon Matthews agrees that time is running out, but he is more optimistic than DiTommaso. Matthews hesitates to use the word “apocalypse” to describe our current status. “It depends on how long we continue on this road. If we continue emitting greenhouse gases for another century, the impact could be apocalyptic.” He describes some of the consequences of unchecked emissions: dramatic sea-level rise, crazy weather

and the collapse of the agricultural system. “Climate change is not reversible.”

Matthews describes another scenario that could portend disaster: geoengineering schemes to stimulate technological fixes for climate change. For example, some scientists are proposing dumping iron sulfate into the oceans to sequester carbon dioxide. Matthews can imagine all sorts of ways in which large-scale projects can malfunction, both in climate impacts and negative side effects.

Yet Matthews agrees with DiTommaso in that we have transferred responsibility for the planet to our heirs: “We’re downloading problems onto future generations and have been for decades.”

WAIT AND SEE

Even if the coming of December 21 doesn’t make one nervous, observing the excitement of others can be entertaining. Just don’t try to talk the soothsayers out of their beliefs.

How would DiTommaso respond to an ardent apocalypse believer? One option, he says, would be to reflect on the thousands of apocalyptic doomsdays that have been predicted over the past 22 centuries. “One hundred per cent of these prophecies have failed. There’s not even one success.” Yet just because something has never occurred before doesn’t negate the possibility it will occur in the future. Perhaps the next doomsday prediction will be the one that comes to pass. Prospectively, DiTommaso says, “Since that proposition is falsifiable, I’d say let’s wait and see.” But he isn’t holding his breath. ■

Paloma Friedman, GrDip (journ.) 09, is a Montreal freelance writer.

To watch Lorenzo DiTommaso’s lecture: concordia.ca/apocalypse

A person wearing a black shirt is holding a silver fork over a white plate. The background is a solid green color.

thought for food

*From soup to nuts,
Concordia's experts serve uncommon
insight on food's pervasive role in
culture, business, nutrition and
defining who we are.*

By Scott McCulloch, BA 90

Concordia professors Rhona Richman Kenneally, Norma Joseph, Jordan LeBel, and Jessica Mudry are members of the university's Food Studies Research Group, part of the Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies in Society and Culture. Here, they offer distinctive takes on food-related subjects.



Eat, sit, talk

Rhona Richman Kenneally, associate professor of design and computation arts in the Faculty of Fine Arts, believes the environment around us significantly affects the ways we interact with food.

Earning degrees in English literature, Canadian history and architecture may be a circuitous route to acquiring expertise in food studies, yet that is how Rhona Richman Kenneally did it.

Richman Kenneally is an associate professor of design and computation arts. Her research begins from the premise that the way we think about food — from the role it plays for individuals to the implications food practices have had on our world — must take into account the wider “built environment.” It must be understood as dynamic interactions between things and living things, spaces and structures, even energies such as electricity.

“When we analyze our relationships to what we eat, we have to recognize that while we manipulate food for our own purposes, it also manipulates us,” Richman Kenneally explains. This results in complex exchanges with wide-reaching implications, she adds.

Her work focuses on understanding connections between what she calls mindful food behaviour and our homes as cooking and eating environments. Mindful eating prioritizes an appreciation of the sensorial and gustatory qualities of foods, of their having been grown and consumed in sustainable ways, and of the shared eating experiences they can

stimulate. She cites the “work triangle,” whose points are the sink, refrigerator and stove, long advocated for kitchens. She also notes a preoccupation with stainless steel or granite surfaces, evident in new kitchen design.

Yet Richman Kenneally doubts whether such simplified parameters of efficiency should be a Holy Grail. “Mindful eating can be facilitated by not installing a sink or stove on a kitchen island, where unrestrained splashed water or grease

were cooked, where they were cooked and which foods gained or lost cachet. “Certainly life became easier for women if electricity meant they didn’t have to load a stove with wood or peat or anthracite. But the centrality of their role was challenged,” Richman Kenneally says. “They had to relearn cooking skills and compete with novelty foods that became available.”

Her research, which is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities

We have to recognize that while we manipulate food for our own purposes, it also manipulates us.

might make cooking seem onerous,” she says, adding that the humble kitchen table, where household members gather for meals, is a key element.

Richman Kenneally says the relationship between food, the kitchen and the cook as creator is an “integrative experience” that involves transformations and negotiations on the part of each. It is an aspect of her current research, which focuses on 1950s to 1970s Ireland, when the republic’s rural areas were transformed by expanded water and electricity networks. These “agents of modernity” had profound effects on how meals

Research Council of Canada, has whetted Richman Kenneally’s appetite to look even deeper into food and the built environment’s profound implications. “Food is one of the markers of cultural values of ecological engagement and environmental, economic and political prioritization. It makes sense to understand it as a bellwether that allows us to investigate all sorts of other priorities — things that give us pleasure or cause trepidation in our world.”

Food for thought.



RAOU DIANOCU



We are what we eat

Norma Joseph, associate professor of religion in the Faculty of Arts and Science, believes food has the power to reveal social and economic systems and cultural mores.

It is a biological fact that people must eat, Norma Joseph says. No dispute there. “But the interesting thing is how diverse our foods are — they are as diverse as we are.”

Joseph’s concern is not nutrition. The associate professor of religion is fascinated by food’s power and its capacity to preserve traditions and tell us who we are.

Food, Joseph contends, defines cultures. In religion, it is the ritual core of ceremony. “Describe to me any religious ritual that does not have food as a central element and I’ll tell you there’s no way that food isn’t relevant to ritual.” She adds: “Foodways are cultural highways. They reveal social and economic systems while communicating historical, local and global narratives.”

Her research pedigree is diverse and extensive, but her interest in food grew incongruously out of her first love: gender issues and Jewish law. “I wanted to do research on a living community, not just on legal text,” she recalls.

Joseph groomed friendships with local Iraqi-Jewish women — her research subjects — tracing their difficult transitions from Baghdad to Montreal. When she asked questions about their religious rituals, “We got nowhere,”

she reveals. “But if we talked about what kinds of food they prepared to keep the family together during Friday night Shabbat or get-togethers, oh my goodness, there was richness and detail.”

Culturally, Joseph says, food marks us. It is a passage to our past.

Food as identity is compelling. Yet Joseph’s research goes deeper than memories of who we are vis-à-vis meals prepared by loving grandmothers. “We are biologically mandated to eat, but we are ethnologically defined by the ways in which we eat, what we eat, how we

If we talked about what kinds of food they prepared to keep the family together during Friday night Shabbat or get-togethers, oh my goodness, there was richness and detail.

“It provides a mechanism for the preservation of tradition. Eating enables simultaneous participation in the past and in the present.”

Joseph’s current research has her setting pen to paper on the use of food in the adaptation process among Iraqi Jews. She notes that *t’beet*, a customary stew prepared by Iraqi Jews, has morphed from a traditional Saturday meal to fare that is emblematic of immigrants. “It has less to do with Sabbath,” Joseph says. “It has become their iconic food, the symbolic food of Iraqi Jews. To them it means, ‘We have survived.’”

eat, who prepares the food and what the food signifies to the people who eat it, because those are all culturally coded. No culture eats the same way. It is all significantly diverse and that is what I am excited by.”

In other words, cultures are what they eat.



Sweet business

Jordan LeBel, associate professor of marketing at John Molson School of Business, says food marketing has never been hotter.

“Food for thought” is a common turn of phrase. Thought for food? Well, that sums up Jordan LeBel.

LeBel, a John Molson School of Business (JMSB) associate professor of marketing, discloses that as a teen he wanted to be a pastry chef. His dad was against it, so he studied management instead. Yet his fascination for culinary delights, especially chocolate, never diminished. Except now, LeBel’s musings come with a heavy dollop of marketing.

His goal is to understand why consumers choose the food they do, especially what he calls “pleasure” foods. Why, then, do dubious doughnuts and savoury snacks sing to us?

LeBel cites two reasons: “bottom-up” factors, such as how long it has been since our last meal; and “top-down” factors that can include one’s mood and mental images and associations. “Comfort foods are imbued with a special sort of magical power,” says LeBel, who is also director of the Luc Beauregard Centre of Excellence in Communications Research at JMSB. “They help you get over whatever ails you at the time.”

His latest project involves Québec en Forme (QeF), a non-governmental organization looking “to qualify and quantify the food supply in three of 140 communities the organization is

involved in across Quebec.” QeF hopes to determine “how easy it is to eat healthy in those communities.”

Who better than supermarket leaders to answer that question, right? Not necessarily. “Most people think supermarkets are in the food business,” says LeBel. “They’re not. They’re in the

information but are not necessarily better informed,” he says. “There’s a lot of confusion and so the industry has moved to decision aids [helpful graphics] on front-of-pack logos.”

Fair-trade, environmental and other “green” logos only add to the existing information deluge, LeBel points out.

Food is trendy. Look at food media. They need content and food shows are really hot. We call it gastro-porn.

real estate business. They sell square footage and make money off that.”

So who is responsible for access to good food: consumers or industry? As a member of the World Platform for Health and Economic Convergence, which aligns business with public health interests, LeBel — and his students — often asks the same question.

Why? “Because food is trendy,” he says. “Look at food media. They need content and food shows are really hot. We call it gastro-porn.” Little wonder that LeBel’s Food Marketing course is wildly popular. “Students are interested, but they need the tools to succeed.”

So do modern supermarket clients. “Consumers have more access to

“If you don’t do your homework and just buy on the basis of a logo, then you think you know more but you don’t necessarily. There are 420 different certification logos for green marketing and eco-friendly products.”

Beyond the white noise of consumer information, LeBel predicts food safety and industry transparency will remain a vibrant issue. Sustainable business practices will grow more sophisticated too. “We’ve seen a lot of ‘green-washing’ and lip service paid to certain things, but as consumers educate themselves and go beyond this initial step of confusion, certain things are here to stay.”

One hopes that includes hot dogs.



Caloric overkill

Jessica Mudry, assistant professor of general studies in the Faculty of Engineering and Computer Science, wonders if policy-makers, and others, should rethink the “language of food.”

Jessica Mudry is interested in the “quantitative language” behind food. Her fascination lies in the “way we talk about food using a nutrition lens” which, she adds, “encourages us to make moral and qualitative judgments about food based on its quantities.”

Calories, carbohydrates and proteins may be quantifiable scientific realities, yet do they create “qualities of food?” Mudry, an assistant professor of general studies in the Faculty of Engineering and Computer Science, cites an advertisement touting the benefits of vitamin E in almonds. The assumption is that there is scientific proof about their “goodness.” “If we are talking about the goodness of almonds, we’re not actually talking about taste or pleasure. We’re talking about something that’s measurable in a lab.” That, says Mudry, is because messages about food quality are often just “discourses of numbers.” When policy is at play, the “goodness” or “badness” of a food has little to do with its taste.

This is where governments fall short. Canada’s Food Guide and Nutrition Facts panels ignore a fundamental aspect of foods: the pleasure we derive from it.

Yet policies focused on what Mudry calls “the scientization of food” look inexorable. Equally relentless are

attempts to “find a nutritional magic bullet in all foods,” she says. “Foods are either villainized or championed based on their nutritional profile. That turns us into eating machines and strips away any sort of humanity or experiential element to food.”

framework adds credence to the notion of good food and bad food, supplanting personal tastes to define a populace by caloric groups.

The pleasure food releases in us is relevant and should be talked about, says Mudry. “Every experience of food

We measure the health of a nation on the calorie. How did we get there? When I was a chemist we used calories to measure units of heat.

That is problematic, Mudry reasons, because if a person’s health can be defined by numbers then so can sickness. “You don’t want somebody walking around saying, ‘I had a good day because I ate 43 grams of fibre.’”

Then there is the calorie, a unit of energy that has become an obsession among dieters and, improbably, a cornerstone of nutrition. “We measure the health of a nation on the calorie. How did we get there? When I was a chemist we used calories to measure units of heat.”

So is our scientific framework around nutrition flawed? That is neither here nor there, she says. “It’s not that it’s an imperfect system; it’s not comprehensive.” Indeed, the

is legitimate and good and has the potential to be good.”

As for the ubiquitous calorie, she hopes her new research will explode myths by asking a key question: “When did the calorie become bad? That is like saying an inch is bad.”

Now there’s an idea worth chewing on. ■

EPICUREAN ADVENTURE OR ENVIRONMENTAL OUTRAGE?

Food means many things to many people, which is why it is an industrial colossus, an endless source of debate and as trendy as high fashion.

There is nothing like food. It nourishes us and awakens our senses. It can strengthen our bones or make us ill. Genetically modified or experienced as molecular gastronomy, food is both the ignoble star of health scares and the cavalry in famine-relief efforts. As nourishment, it can range from junk to the sublime. Sometimes it is not available at all.

Food is controversial, too. In October, the Ontario Medical Association called for the introduction of graphic warning labels on junk food to combat obesity. The proposed measure would add to an already crowded set of labels: no-fat, low-fat, probiotic, free-range, dolphin-friendly, fair trade, gluten-free, nitrate-free and on and on.

"We've got to a point where public health is at odds with the food industry and often for good reasons" says John Molson School of Business marketing professor Jordan LeBel. "There is a lot of finger pointing going on. But fixing the problem will require co-operation and honesty."

While in November 2012 Americans pondered who to elect president, Californians contemplated Proposition 37, which would have required genetically modified organisms in food to be labelled. It failed at the ballots but sparked a broader discussion on what we eat.

Tussles over food have always been with us. As recently as the 1960s, scientists debated whether diet was important to health. By the 1970s, the links between saturated fat and heart disease became incontrovertible, yet to the incredulity of many nutritionists,

debate over the ill-effects of sugar carries on to this day.

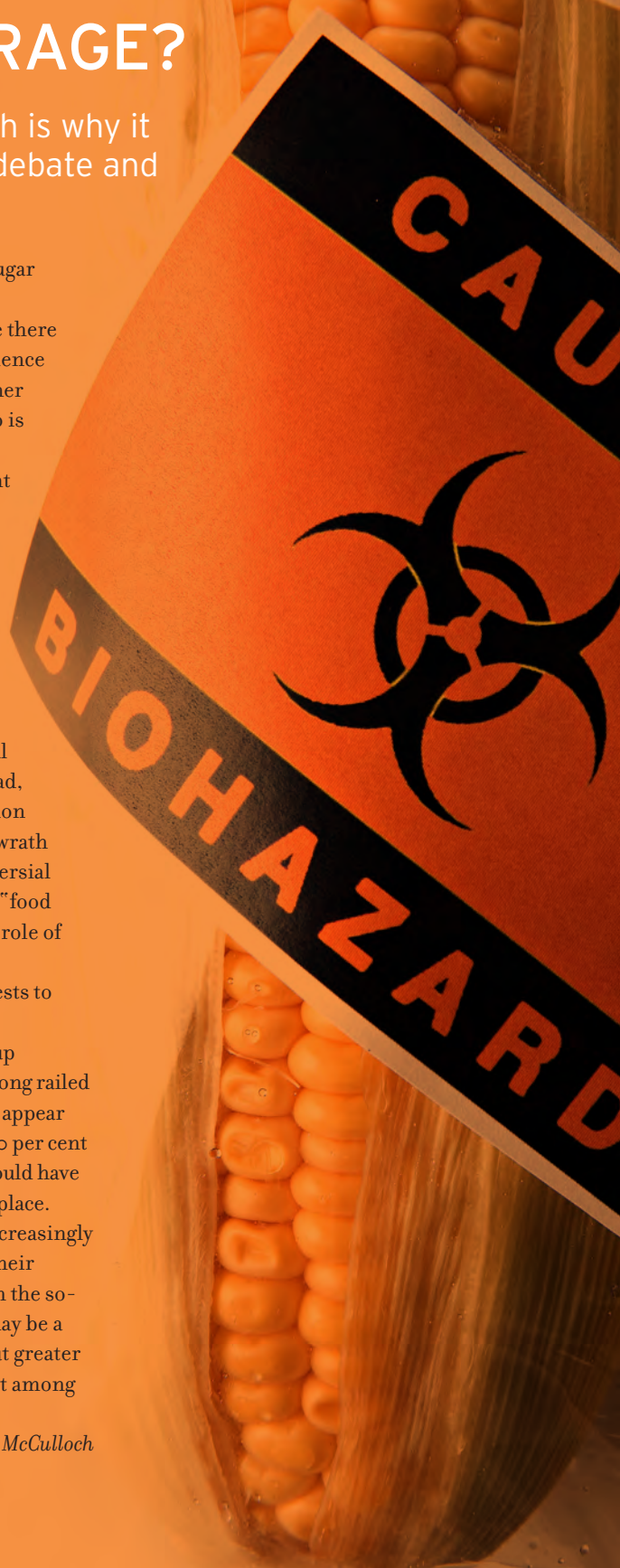
Some commentators believe there is an overemphasis on food science and little consideration for other areas. "What we continue to do is try to find better units to use," says Jessica Mudry, an assistant professor of general studies in Concordia's Faculty of Engineering and Computer Science. "Now we're into carbs, but we're still looking at food with a scientific framework. All we're doing is changing the unit."

Then there are the ecological concerns. In Canada and abroad, food production and distribution methods frequently incur the wrath of environmentalists. Controversial subjects include the impact of "food miles" on global warming, the role of packaging in plastic pollution and the destruction of rainforests to plant palm oil crops.

Dubious health claims crop up frequently. Nutritionists have long railed against fatuous statements that appear on packaged foods, such as "100 per cent fat-free" on a soft drink that would have never contained fat in the first place.

Meanwhile, shoppers are increasingly interested in knowing where their food comes from. Emphasis on the so-called farm-to-fork journey may be a result of recent food scares, but greater transparency is already evident among major food industry players.

—Scott McCulloch



Concordia's Anxiety and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorders Laboratory leads the way toward a new treatment for anxiety disorders

BY LUCIANA GRAVOTTA
PHOTOS BY CHRISTIAN FLEURY

At first glance, associate professor of psychology Adam Radomsky's unassuming lab in Concordia's Richard J. Renaud Science Complex looks like any other office space. The kitchen is a nice added touch. The extra bottles of Purell? Probably just precautionary. But on closer inspection: a used bedpan, a bag of soil, potentially bio-hazardous material... and a live tarantula?

These and a host of other odd items are among the tools used in research conducted on the non-traditional safety-behaviour approach to therapy in Radomsky's Anxiety and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorders Laboratory. "Most of what happens in my lab is to find ways to make treatments more appealing and acceptable to people," Radomsky explains.

The current common treatment for anxiety disorders is exposure-based therapy. The concept is simple: the best way to get rid of your fear — whether it's of snakes, germs or flying — is to face it. This is easier said than done. Standing one metre from an 11-centimetre-wide Chilean Rose tarantula is unpleasant for most but absolutely terrifying for arachnophobes (those with a phobia of spiders).



GLING THE WEB OF FEAR

While exposure has proven widely successful and has been used by mental health practitioners for decades, it can only help those willing to endure it. Approximately half of patients who start exposure-based therapy drop out. "I've seen that on a personal level in my clinical work," says Hannah Levy, MA 12, a doctoral student in the anxiety disorders lab. "A lot of clients can't really tolerate it. So they kind of run for the hills, they quit early."

CHALLENGING THE STATUS QUO

The Anxiety and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorders lab, which Radomsky established shortly after he arrived at Concordia in 2001, is at the forefront of a breakaway trend in research that may help more patients stick with treatment. Considering anxiety disorders are some of the most prevalent and debilitating, the endeavour should not be shortchanged. With the help of colleagues at the University of British Columbia and the University of Reading in England, Radomsky's team is bringing back an idea abandoned in the 1970s: that making people feel

therapy for a range of anxiety disorders. CBT posits that to change your emotions (anxiety) you need to change how you react (behaviour) and how you think (cognition) when you face the things that make you anxious.

Exposure emphasizes the behavioural part of the therapy — preventing escape from an anxiety-provoking situation. It's the cognitive side, however, that can leverage people's natural curiosity instinct and get them to more willingly test their beliefs about the things they fear. "If someone is afraid because they think that when they get close to a spider it will jump on them, then by being in a room with a spider they will get some real-world evidence about what actually happens," says Radomsky.

One of the lab's studies will soon be published in the journal *Cognitive Therapy and Research*. It tested whether giving people access to "safety gear" before sharing a room with a tarantula would make them feel that the experience was more acceptable. The goal was to challenge whatever worry was associated with their hairy companion. The first group of participants was

There really is a reaction out there to this work. People are calling it "heresy," which tells me that we're really challenging something.

safer when they face their fear will make treatment less distressing and, by extension, more doable. One example would be to let an arachnophobe wear gloves when asked to get close to a spider. This spoonful-of-sugar idea was originally rejected because a large component of exposure involves stopping patients from escaping their fears.

Radomsky thinks it's time for a more nuanced view, one that puts emphasis on the "C" in CBT, or cognitive behaviour therapy — the most effective

presented with a buffet of beekeeping equipment before entering the tarantula room. The second group didn't get any gear. All participants were encouraged to test their most negative belief about the spider. For example, one participant thought spiders are unpredictable, so he tested this by turning off the lights. Not only were participants who donned some of the safety equipment able to get closer to the tarantula than those who didn't, they also displayed a bigger change in their negative belief.

ADAM RADOMSKY, WITH IGBY THE CHILEAN ROSE TARANTULA, IN CONCORDIA'S ANXIETY AND OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDERS LABORATORY. LAB MEMBERS STUDY SAFETY BEHAVIOURS, A NON-TRADITIONAL ELEMENT OF THERAPY TO TREAT ANXIETY DISORDERS SUCH AS FEAR OF SPIDERS.

"This shows that using safety behaviour helps people get more useful information than not using safety behaviour," he says. If just a short session of information gathering is enough to help people reduce their fear, then the usual approach of several prolonged exposures without any access to safety behaviour may not be necessary.

"There really is a reaction out there to this work," says Radomsky. "People are calling it 'heresy,' which tells me that we're really challenging something." While the work is still controversial, it is gaining momentum. Two of the lab's studies on safety behaviour have been independently replicated by other laboratories.

This is good news for patients as well as therapists. "It's hard to sit with someone who is extremely fearful and ask them to stay very upset," Radomsky says, based on his own experience. He regularly gets feedback from therapists grateful that the lab's research is expanding their treatment choices.

THE RESEARCHER-PRACTITIONER

Irena Milosevic, MA 06, PhD 12, a clinical psychologist and former member of the anxiety lab, believes it may be some time until safety behaviour is fully embraced by therapists. "There are already a number of studies coming out from other labs to support the idea, but the next step is to apply it in clinical settings," she says.

While clinical trials may still be a few years away, the initial push to investigate safety behaviours came straight out of clinicians' experiences in their practice. Radomsky's former supervisor at UBC, professor Jack Rachman, had tried using hygienic wipes as a safety behaviour with patients who suffered from obsessive-compulsive disorder but wouldn't tolerate exposure therapy. He found that it lowered their compulsion to clean. The success of the treatment led him to pursue the question empirically in his lab and publish a study with Radomsky.

Radomsky has continued the approach: "I won't embark on a research



PHD STUDENTS HANNAH LEVY (LEFT) AND JESSICA SENN DISPLAY SOME OF THE TOOLS THEY USE TO RESEARCH SAFETY-BEHAVIOUR THERAPY FOR THOSE WITH AFFLICTIONS SUCH AS OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER.

Members of Concordia's Anxiety and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorders Laboratory include a number of PhD candidates. Here are three current and former members.

JESSICA SENN: NO DISTRACTIONS



PhD student **Jessica Senn**, MA 11, is investigating how distraction can be used as a safety behaviour. "Distraction" in this case refers to anything that helps people

distance themselves from the situation they are in. It could be anything from counting backwards to pretending they're somewhere else. As with other safety behaviours, there is still much controversy as to whether distraction interferes with exposure therapy, but Senn thinks that the key to resolving the issue is to view the level of distraction as a Goldilocks conundrum: too much or too little won't work. Yet just the right amount of distraction might allow patients to feel less overwhelmed and still reap the benefits of the therapy. "No one has ever looked at it in this way before," she says.

HANNAH LEVY: UNCONTAMINATED



The research of **Hannah Levy**, MA 12, focuses on contamination fear. The items in a study expected to be published soon include a bedpan full of apple juice and a

mixture of potting soil, dead crickets and cat hair. She asked participants to get as close as they could, starting out by smelling the object from three feet to eventually touching it and afterwards rubbing their hands together. The study tested whether letting participants use gloves – a safety behaviour – during approach would make the experience more tolerable. She found that not only did gloves make treatment more acceptable to participants but also that they had less anxiety and were able to get much closer to each object – potentially facilitating more information gathering about their fear of contamination.

IRENA MILOSEVIC: SPIDER WOMAN



"Irena readily took on a controversial research topic and her work is changing the field," says Radomsky of his former doctoral student **Irena Milosevic**, MA 06,

PhD 12. Now a clinical psychologist at St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton in Ontario, Milosevic was one of the first graduate students in the anxiety lab to test safety behaviours' effects on treatment acceptability and belief change.

Her first study involved a 26-centimetre ribbon snake and in later studies she handled a tarantula. "In another lifetime I would have been a zoologist or an ecologist," Milosevic says. "When I left the lab I even tried to convince Adam to let me keep the tarantula!"

project unless it has a very close connection to the experiences of people struggling with an anxiety disorder," he says. Being a researcher and a practitioner helps him bring information from his practice to the lab and use his research to develop more effective treatments for his patients.

"That translation is really the body and soul of the lab," says Hannah Levy.

Radomsky is very excited about the next step in his patient-inspired research: to test a new version of CBT for compulsive checking that incorporates safety behaviours and emphasizes a change of belief in a clinical population. "We're using a treatment designed to be maximally acceptable and that no one has tested before," he says.

YIN AND YANG

The myriad of awards and accolades that members of the anxiety lab have received, such as the doctoral research award from the Quebec government for PhD student Jessica Senn, MA 11, and Milosevic's Canadian Institutes of Health Research doctoral award, attest to the quality of their research and their productivity. While the lab team works hard, it keeps humour a crucial part of its ethos. "We interact with people who are often struggling daily," says Radomsky. "Some of them are going through periods of agony, and I think a little bit of humour goes a long way in helping to provide a break from all that."

Radomsky often sends ridiculous, fabricated academic articles – such

as "Unwanted Intrusive Thoughts and the Growth of Facial Hair" – to the lab printer, providing some entertaining material for his graduate students to find. "Everyone in the lab is a big joker," says Milosevic. Before she left the anxiety lab last year, she hid several Halloween rubber spiders around the premises as a parting gift to her colleagues and as a salute to the lab tarantulas she had worked with.

Lab coordinator Stephanie Lavoie, BSc 05, has been working with Radomsky for the past decade. "The main motto here is that in order to be serious you also have to have fun," she says. "It's that yin-yang type of thing." ■

— *Luciana Gravotta, MA (psych) 10, GrDip 12, is a freelance writer.*

Concordia satellite set for liftoff

Two years ago, Scott Gleason, assistant professor in Concordia's Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, pitched to students a daring idea. No Quebec university had ever launched a satellite into space. If the students could enter and win the Canadian Satellite Design Challenge — organized by the space consulting company, Geocentrix — this would be their prize.

From the students' workspace on the 12th floor of the Engineering, Computer Science and Visual Arts Integrated Complex, to the gala dinner in Ottawa where the team learned on September 29 that they had placed first, it was a remarkable journey. And an unbeatable learning experience. "I am almost incredulous, thinking of all the hours of work and dedication that our whole team put in, now finally paying off with such an incredible result," says team leader Nick Sweet.

The winning teammates are members of Space Concordia, a student-run astronautical engineering association. The core team members, mainly undergraduates advised by a handful of graduate students and Gleason himself, are all thrilled by their feat.

The satellite, called a CubeSat, is smaller than a shoebox and, at 2.84 kilograms, well below the maximum allowable competition weight of four kilograms. Yet the students' winning design is still big enough for a "payload" of sophisticated scientific equipment. Once launched, the satellite will orbit the earth 36 times per day and relay data back to a ground station set up in the Montreal region.

The CubeSat's mission is to study the South Atlantic Anomaly, a near-Earth plasma cloud over South America, composed of high-energy particles known to disrupt the instrumentation of spacecraft and aircraft.

Tiago Leao, the team's leader on the



WINNING SATELLITE TEAM (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT): ALEX TEODOR IONITA, IVAN IVANOV, STEFANOS DERMENAKIS, ROBERT JAKUBOWICZ, ALEX POTAPOV, TIAGO LEAO, NICK SWEET, SHAWN STOUTE AND GREGORY GIBSON.

CubeSat's communication system, explains: "The satellite will be in contact with the ground station for 11 minutes of each orbit, and this is when we will be able to download the data from the South Atlantic Anomaly, as well as obtain information about the satellite's health."

For months, the team knew they had a strong satellite concept because of their solid finish in the design phase of the competition. However, they then had to actually build the satellite to specifications that could withstand the close scrutiny of the judges. This rigorous

down to a 10th of a millimetre.

It's also vitally important that the satellite is tough. The Concordia satellite was mounted on a "shake table" and subjected to extreme vibration testing that simulates an actual launch. If no screws shake loose, the satellite is in good shape. On the final days, all of the satellite's functional systems were inspected to ensure they will be able to do what they were designed to do.

"The atmosphere during the testing process was just incredible," says Sweet. "We were underslept and putting in 20-

We were putting in 20-hour days, but
I wouldn't have traded in that experience.

process was conducted by industry experts at the David Florida Laboratory of the Canadian Space Agency in Ottawa, where commercial and research satellites from the United States and Europe are routinely tested.

From the initial 12 teams, Concordia was one of three selected for final testing. No small detail is overlooked at this stage. The machining process on the finished structure must be accurate

hour days, but I don't think any of the competing teams would have traded in that experience. We've learned so much, and this is only the beginning of what we hope to achieve."

OUT-OF-THIS-WORLD WINNERS

The winning student satellite design team: Justin Jean-Pierre, Giovanna Franco, Siddhartha Kattoju, Shawn Stoute, Tiago Leao, Mehdi Sabzalian,

Alex Potapov, Ivan Ivanov, Stefanos Dermenakis, Andrei Jones, Tyson Boer, Chelsea Pomerontz, Gregory Gibson, Michelle Boyce, Alex Teodor Ionita, Robert Jakubowicz, Matthias Martineau and Nick Sweet.

Team advisors: Dmitry Rozhdestvenskiy, MASc 11, engineer in residence in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering; Dominic Ng, BEng 95, engineer in residence in the Department of Mechanical and Industrial Engineering; John Salik, a PhD candidate in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering; Bill Pontikakis, BEng 03, MASc 03; and Scott Gleason.

INSTITUTE FOR WATER, ENERGY AND SUSTAINABLE SYSTEMS

It is no small task, reinventing post-secondary education to tackle 21st-century challenges like climate change, widespread water pollution, dwindling

fossil fuels and increasingly urbanized populations. Yet this is what Catherine Mulligan, a professor of building, civil and environmental engineering, undertook for herself and her colleagues when she proposed a research unit that has just been launched by Concordia.

The Concordia Institute for Water, Energy and Sustainable Systems will train students to be at the forefront of sustainable development practices. It will also promote research into new systems, technologies and solutions for water, energy and resource conservation. While the Faculty of Engineering and Computer Science is the home base of the institute, under director Catherine Mulligan, its activities include Concordia's four academic faculties and will also provide opportunities for collaborations with industry and communities. The institute will welcome its first student cohort in 2013.

Following the official go-ahead from Senate, Dean Robin Drew said, "This is the culmination of many years of hard work and the start of an ambitious new era for our faculty."

TWO NEW RESEARCH CHAIRS

The Faculty of Engineering and Computer Science welcomed two research chairs in 2012. The Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada /Ericsson Industrial Research Chair in Model-Based Software Management was awarded to electrical and computer engineering professor Ferhat Khendek. His research focuses on strategies to prevent and deal with service interruptions in such areas as mobile computing, telephony and banking.

The NSERC Industrial Research Chair in Automated Composites Manufacturing was awarded to professor of mechanical and industrial engineering Suong Hoa, who works with the aerospace industry to design, manufacture and test new materials that make aircraft lighter, while ensuring toughness and durability.

This brings the total research chairs in the faculty to 25. ■

—Laurence Miall



ELECTRICAL AND COMPUTER ENGINEERING PROFESSOR FERHAT KHENDEK, ONE OF THE FACULTY OF ENGINEERING AND COMPUTER SCIENCE'S NEW RESEARCH CHAIRS.

HOMECOMING 2012

This year's Homecoming, held from September 28 to October 11, brought thousands of Concordians and friends to the university's two campuses to socialize and learn at successful fun events and insightful public discussions.



1 Shuffle 23



3 President's Reunion Gala

2 The Beatles and the Montreal Connection



5 Career Speed Networking



4 Family Fair Day

6 The last lecture? Apocalypse then and now



7 Up Close and Personal



JOE DRESNER

SYLVAIN-JACQUES DESJARDINS

LOUISE MORGAN



Homecoming kicked off September 28 with the Shuffle 23. Hundreds of faculty members, staff, students, alumni and others took part in the annual 6.5-km walkathon between campuses and raised more than \$53,000 for university scholarships and bursaries. Following the Shuffle, Concordia President Alan Shepard welcomed a crowd of about 1,000 Concordians at the President's Picnic on the Loyola Campus. There were 85 prizes handed out and the 2012 Shuffler of the Year was awarded to Bryan Barbieri, marketing professor in the John Molson School of Business. Pictured (from left) are student Shufflers **Sarah Nesrala** and **Roshani Apputhurai**. 1

Later that evening, **Craig Morrison**, PhD 00, 2 ethnomusicologist, musician, writer and long-time Concordia instructor, delivered an entertaining lecture entitled "The Beatles and the Montreal connection" at Concordia's J.A. de Sève Cinema. Morrison discussed Beatles history and visits by the Fab Four and John Lennon to Montreal. He also engaged the audience of about 100 with slides and recorded music and playing some songs live.

The next day, Faculty of Engineering and Computer Science alumni from reunion-year classes joined up at Concordia. They started their afternoon with a tour of the university's Engineering, Computer Science and Visual Arts Integrated Complex before a cocktail reception.

They later joined fellow alumni at the President's Reunion Gala at the Westin Hotel. The graduates and their guests enjoyed cocktails, dinner and some dancing to live music of the '50s, '60s and '70s by Vintage Wine. The reunion featured a special tribute to the Georgians for the 75th anniversary of their first graduating class and the Association of Alumni of Sir George Williams University. 3

While Saturday might have been a day for grownups, Sunday was all about the kids. Legions of families gathered at the Loyola Campus for a variety of activities and performances, including face painting, bike stunts, cupcake making and a magician. 4

Festivities continued in the Henry F. Hall Building on October 2. Concordia alumni from various professions shared career stories and job-hunting tips with current students at the Career Speed Networking event, which is like speed dating with a professional twist. Pictured at left is **Harry Stergiopoulos**, BA 92, MBA 02, an investment advisor with Asante Wealth Management, counselling an interested student. 5

On October 3, Concordia professor **Lorenzo DiTommaso** dissected various doomsday scenarios in his talk, "The last lecture? Apocalypse then and now," to an audience of about 260 at Concordia's D.B. Clarke Theatre. (See also "It's the end of the world as we know it [or is it?]" on page 20.) The lecture was followed by a question-and-answer period moderated by CTV Montreal's **Caroline Van Vlaardingen**, BA 84, pictured at left with DiTommaso and **Marie-Claire Morin**, vice-president of Advancement and Alumni Relations. 6 To watch Lorenzo DiTommaso's lecture: concordia.ca/apocalypse.

Homecoming wrapped up October 11 in the JMSB Building's BMO Amphitheatre. CTV sports anchor and reporter **Randy Tieman** (left) moderated Up Close and Personal with **Julien BriseBois**, EMBA 07, 7 assistant general manager of the National Hockey League's Tampa Bay Lightning. To about 110 hockey-starved alumni and others, BriseBois recounted his journey from Montreal law offices to the NHL hierarchy.

—Shaimaa El-Ghazaly

For news on the full slate of recent and future Concordia Advancement and Alumni Relations events in Montreal, across Canada and the world over, visit concordia.ca/alumni-giving.



1 Birks Recognition Event

TIES THAT BIND AND OPEN ACCESS

"There are probably few universities that can say they've had the consistent support of a particular family for 80 years. It is a truly remarkable phenomenon." That's how Concordia president Alan Shepard described the university's relationship with Montreal's Birks family and Birks Family Foundation at a celebratory reception on October 17.

The Birks-Concordia ties stretch back to the 1930s, when Gerald W. Birks served on the Board of Governors of Sir George Williams College, one of the university's founding institutions. Since then, Birks family members and its foundation have donated time, money and name to myriad university causes.

Evan and Jonathan Birks, Gerald's descendants, were among those on hand for the event. Evan Birks related that Gerald, rather than follow his father and brothers into their successful Henry Birks and Sons jewellery business, devoted his life to the YMCA. The Y's educational program evolved into Sir George Williams College. "Henry was known to have said, 'Every successful family should be able to donate one son to the benefit of the public good,'" he quipped.

He also praised University Librarian Gerald Beasley for his advocacy of the open access initiative, which aims to

make publicly funded research findings available for free on the internet.

In 2012, the Birks Family Foundation donated \$150,000 to Concordia Libraries to help finance the effort. Two years ago, Concordia became the first major Canadian university with an open access mandate supported by its faculty members.

Alan Shepard is pictured with **Michael Spencer** at the event in the R. Howard Webster Library. **1**

—Howard Bokser

VATICAN II AT 50

The Second Vatican Council, better known as Vatican II, is widely considered the most important religious event of the 20th century. The council was launched on October 11, 1962, when Pope John XXIII welcomed 2,400 bishops from 116 different countries, hundreds of theologians and several Protestant and Orthodox observers to Rome. The historic four-year process opened previously unexamined avenues to ethical, political and social issues, and set the church's future direction.

Yet is it still relevant 50 years later? Unquestionably, says **John W. O'Malley**,

S.J. (Society of Jesus), University Professor in the Theology Department at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. **2** O'Malley examined the council's continuing significance during his talk, called "Reform and Relevance: The Second Vatican Council at 50," at Concordia on October 18 at the Loyola Jesuit Hall and Conference Centre on the Loyola Campus. "The council provided a recognition of modernity," O'Malley says.

A main focus of the council was to instill a participatory style of church governance. O'Malley adds that the council, perhaps best known to non-Catholics for changing the church's view of other religions, also encouraged it "to become a promoter of human rights, religious liberty, dialogue and civility and recognition of all religions."

The talk was part of the Loyola Public Lecture Series on Ethics in Society. The series was inaugurated in 2009 by the Jesuits in English Canada in collaboration with Concordia to recall and continue the Loyola College legacy of Jesuit higher education. ■

—Howard Bokser

(For more, see concordia.ca/alumni/accnt.)



2 Loyola Public Lecture Series



Call for chapter volunteers

We're seeking volunteers to help organize events in California and Washington State. It's a meaningful way to network and give back to your alma mater.

For more information, please contact
Lina Uberti, alumni officer,
Geographic Chapters,
at lina.uberti@concordia.ca.

NOTICE

Concordia Sports Hall of Fame Call for Nominations

The deadline for nominations to be considered for the 2013 induction ceremony is

January 31, 2013

Nominations should be accompanied by as much supporting documentation as possible, because it is the documentation – not the number of times a name is put forward or endorsed – that is considered at the time of selection. Nominations do not expire if they are not selected in the year in which they are made.

Visit athletics.concordia.ca/nomination.html for a nomination form or call 514-848-2424, ext. 3852, for more information.

GO STINGERS!



CALL FOR CLASS REUNION CHAMPIONS FOR HOMECOMING 2013

Graduates from the classes of 1963 and earlier, 1968, 1973, 1978, 1983, 1988, 1993, 1998 and 2003 will reunite to celebrate their anniversary years at Homecoming 2013. If you would like to volunteer as a Class Champion for your reunion class, please contact Erin Mullins, associate alumni officer, Homecoming and Reunions, at erin.mullins@concordia.ca or 514-848-2424, ext. 3881.

Help us bring together your former classmates to celebrate this meaningful event.

SUMMER

Reach 90,000 Quebecers!
**Advertise in
Concordia University Magazine**

The quarterly provides advertisers with an excellent and cost-effective way to reach our affluent and highly educated readers.

For information about advertising rates and publication deadlines, contact:

Yanick Dahan
Coordinator, Alumni Services & Marketing
Phone: 514-848-2424, ext. 3819
Fax: 514-848-4510
Email: Yanick.Dahan@concordia.ca

UNIVERSITY
Conc

NON-TRAD LAWYERS > CONCORDIA

Alumni with more than one degree from Concordia, Sir George Williams and/or Loyola are listed under their earliest graduation year.

50TH REUNION

63 Lawrence S. Bloomberg, BComm, LLD 96, was recently named chancellor of Ryerson University. Lawrence is chair of the board of directors

of BloombergSen Inc., an investment counselling firm in Toronto. He is also a member of the Order of Canada and recipient of the Order of Ontario. He holds an MBA from McGill.

65 Peter Tetro, BComm, lives in Kingston, Ont. He is the animator of the Lamplighter's Forum, which promotes life ethics surrounding faith and the

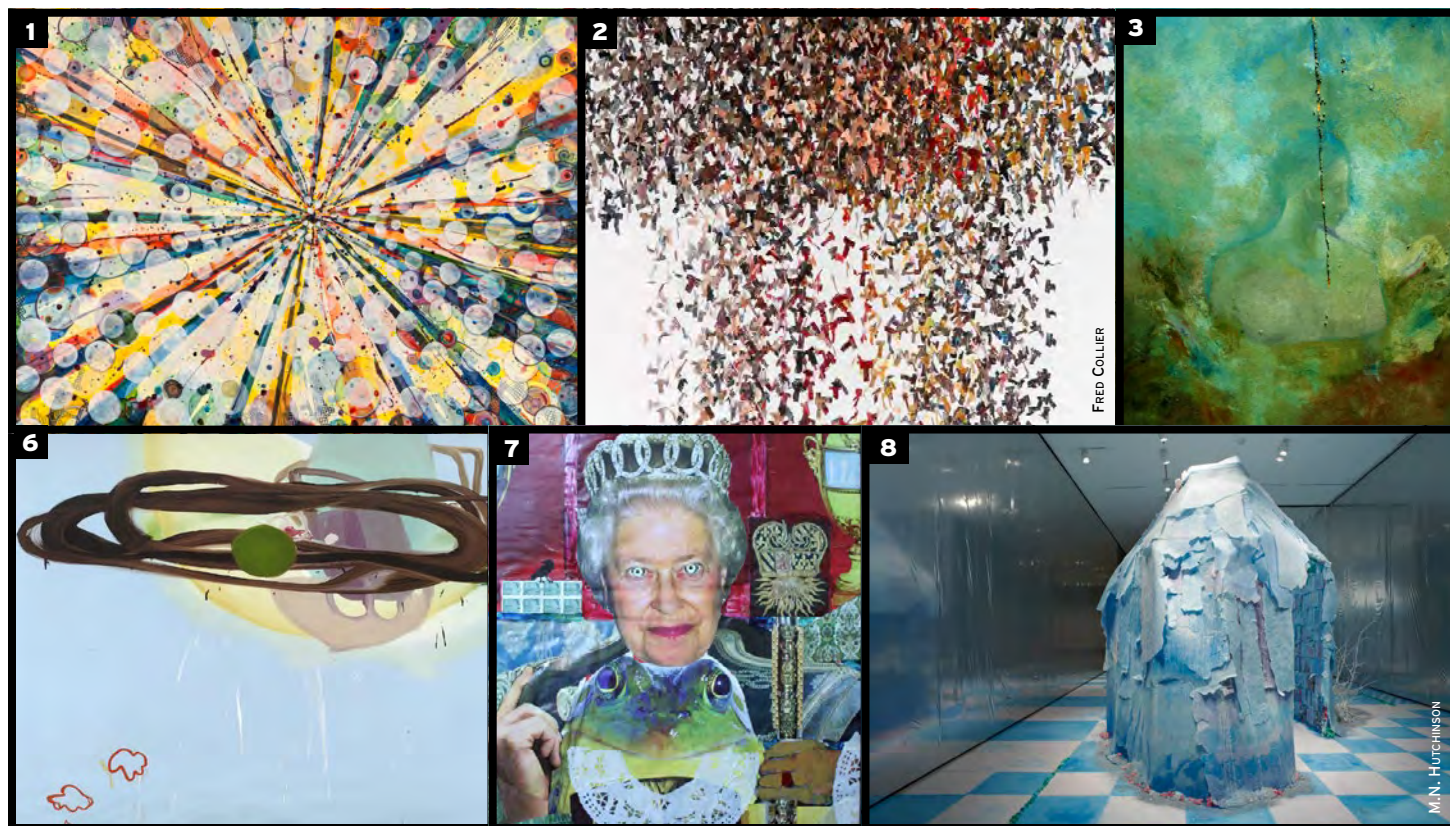
environment. Peter also writes poems about his reflections on human sexuality at theologyofthebodypoems.com.

45TH REUNION

68 Lilian Broca, BFA, a Vancouver artist, is the subject of *Return to Byzantium*, directed by Adelina Suvagau. The film won the best documentary award at

the 2012 San Pedro International Film Festival. Lilian was awarded the 2012 Beatrice Gross Independent Scholar Award for further artistic development in her career. She also holds an MFA from Pratt Institute in New York City.

70 Robert Douglas (Bob) Philip, BA, MA 86, was recently named senior advisor to the Vice President.



1 Landon Mackenzie, MFA 79, is holding an exhibition of selected works, called "Nervous Centre," at the Esker Foundation art gallery in Calgary from September 7 to January 5, 2013. Landon has exhibited in more than 90 shows across Canada and internationally, and is collected by many museums including the National Gallery of Canada and the Vancouver Art Gallery. landonmackenzie.com 1) *Signal (Birthday Party)*

2 Carole Simard-Laflamme, BA (transl.) 85, participated in an exhibition called "Les robes du temps, autour de la flamme" at the Fashion and Lace Museum in Calais, France, from May 10 to September 30. carolesimardlaflamme.com 2) *La robe des nations 2*

3 Frances Foster, BFA 90, is holding a solo exhibition of her paintings called "Selective Memory" at the Wilder & Davis Gallery in Montreal from November 9 to January 11, 2013. 3) *Fragments of Jewel, Rock and Feather*

4 Pierre Dalpé, BFA 93, exhibited his photography as part of an exhibition called "La rentrée" in the York Corridor Vitrites at Concordia University's FOFA Gallery from September 4 to October 12. He has exhibited in Canada, the United States, Europe, Russia and Mexico. In 2012, Les Éditions Cayenne published a monograph that spans 20 years of his photographic practice featuring two series: *Clothes Minded* and *Personae*. pierredealpe.com 4) *Siddiqi Sisters*

5 Susan Shulman, BFA (studio arts) 96, held an exhibition of her art called "Blue Scapes" at Galerie Kozen in Montreal from October 23 to 27. susanshulman.com 5) *Mandusa*

6 Jennifer Lefort, BFA 02, exhibited her contemporary artwork from the Hydro-Québec collection at the Électrium in Sainte-Julie, Que., from September 28 to 30. Lefort has won a number of artistic prizes, including the prestigious Plaskett Award. 6) *Catching On*

7 Jean Martin, BFA (studio art) 02, participated in a group exhibition called "God Save the Queen" at the Galérie 203 in Montreal from November 1 to 30. 7) *Reine Elisabeth II*

Students, at the University of British Columbia. Bob is a member of the Concordia University Sports Hall of Fame as a builder and had been UBC's director of Athletics and Recreation since 1994.

71 Rosemary McCracken, BA (Eng.), recently published her first mystery novel, *Safe Harbor* (Imajin Books). The book was shortlisted for Britain's

Debut Dagger in 2010. Rosemary lives in Toronto.

77 Mindy Paskell-Mede, BA, received the honorary title of Lawyer Emeritus from the Quebec Bar in July. The distinction recognizes career excellence and achievement, exceptional influence and a sustained and remarkable contribution to the profession and community. Mindy is co-founder of Nicholl Paskell-

Mede LLP, a Montreal law firm that specializes in professional liability insurance and legal work for the insurance industry.

81 Patricia Abbott, BA (journ.), is co-author of a chapter on Canada's choral landscape in the recently published *Cambridge Companion to Choral Music* (Cambridge University Press). Patricia is artistic director of the Lake MacDonald Music Centre in Harrington, Que., and has been the English Montreal School Board Chorale's senior chorale conductor since 1990.

Robert Courteau, BComm, was recently named CEO of Toronto-based Altus Group, which specializes in consulting, software and data solutions for the real estate industry.

Gerald T. McCaughey, BComm, was named one of the 50 most influential leaders in the world for 2012 by *Bloomberg Markets* magazine. Gerald was selected in the Bankers category and is the first Canadian to be named to Bloomberg's annual ranking. He is president and CEO of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce in Toronto.

John Oriettas, BFA, plays Paul in the Montreal-based Beatles tribute band REPLAY. In August, the band released a four-song EP and video, featuring two Beatles remakes and two originals. "We hope people will enjoy our labour of love, because it is out of our love and passion for the Beatles that we do what we do." replaythebeatles.com

85 Maria L. Ierfino-Adornato, MA (Eng. Lit.), a Montreal freelance writer and business consultant, recently published a historical novel, *McCord's Quiet Rebellion* (Chronicle Publishing). Maria holds a BA from McGill University

and EMBA from Université du Québec à Montréal.

Gloria Taylor, GrDip (ed. tech.), was invited to read one of her poems at the launching of the anthology *That Not Forgotten* (Hidden Brook Press, North Shore Series) at the Yacht Club in Kingston, Ont. Gloria is a retired ESL and French teacher. Her poems have appeared in *VISTA* magazine, American and Canadian anthologies and the *Kingston Whig-Standard* newspaper.

89 Pierre Bellemare, BA (psych.), recently created a free online classified ads website, nedchase.com, where online buyers and sellers can list their items for sale in a favourable environment. "Our site is verified by three independent impartial third parties: Godaddy verified domain, Verasafe trusted commerce and McAfee hackersafe daily secured." Pierre lives in Laval, Que.

Steve Prentice, BA (comm.), is a specialist in organizational psychology in Toronto. He is a partner in the Bristall Group, which specializes in developing and affirming professional skills. Steve's third book, *Work Like a Wolf*, was followed by the launch of his Wolf on Wheels project, for which he toured Canada and the U.S. and gave free presentations about how to find and keep work.

91 Alyson Grant, BA (phil.). MA (Eng.) 97, GrDip (journ.) 00, is chair of the Department of English at Montreal's Dawson College. Alyson's first play, *Trench Patterns*, recently ran at Montreal's Infinithéâtre, directed by Guy Sprung. It won Infinithéâtre's 2011 Write-on-Q! competition and was one of six plays chosen from more than 400 submissions for the Fall 2012 Festival of Staged



8 Tricia Middleton, MFA 05, is participating in the "Misled by Nature: Contemporary Art and the Baroque" exhibition at the Art Gallery of Alberta in Edmonton, co-presented with the National Gallery of Canada, from September 15 to January 6, 2013. triciamiddleton.net
8) *Embracing Ruin and Oblivion is the Only Way to Live Now*

9 Gabriela Ana Lim, BFA 08, participated in a two-artist exhibition entitled "Inspiration Buenos Aires" at L'entrepôt in Lachine, Que., from November 9 to December 16. The show featured Gabriela's latest paintings, drawings and digital art, which were inspired by the streets of Buenos Aires. gabyylim.com 9) *Pebeta de San Telmo*

Concordia chancellor **L. Jacques**

Ménard, BComm 67, LLD 06, was awarded the Montreal Heart Institute's Medal of Honour at its fundraiser, Grand Bal des Vins-Coeurs, in September. The award is in recognition of Jacques's efforts on behalf of the institute's foundation, of which he was chairman from 2005 to 2011. Jacques is chairman of BMO Nesbitt Burns and president of BMO Financial Group in Montreal.



Concordia deputy chancellor

Jonathan Wener, BComm 71, received the Fraser Institute's 2012 T. Patrick Boyle Founder's Award in Montreal in October. In addition, Jonathan was named Concordia's deputy chancellor in July 2012. He will step in for the chancellor, currently L. Jacques Ménard, BComm 67, in his absence. Jonathan was a member of the university's Board of Governors from 1995 to 2012 and its vice-chair from 2005 to 2011. He also served as chair of the Real Estate Planning Committee. Jonathan is chairman and CEO of Canderel, a real estate investment company based in Montreal. Since he launched the Déf Corporatif Canderel fundraising run in 1989, it has raised over \$7 million for cancer research.



Daniel Cross, BFA 91, MFA 98, and the company he co-founded, EyeSteelFilm, won two Emmy Awards in October for the documentary *Last Train Home*. The film was selected by the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences in the categories of Best Documentary and Outstanding Business and Economic Reporting – Long Form. *Last Train Home* tells the story of the world's largest annual human migration — in which 130 million migrant Chinese factory workers travel by train to their home villages for the New Year — and the chaos it causes.



Mika Goodfriend, BFA 12, received a \$10,000 prize in the 10th annual BMO 1st Art Awards in August. Mika's award-winning photography, *Benoit et Suzanne*, *Reynald et Marylda*, from his Snowbirds series, is an in-depth visual exploration of Québécois identity and culture that he discovered while visiting the retirement community at Breezy Hill in Pompano Beach, Fla. Next year, Mika plans to continue the series.



Frédéric Serre, BA (journ.) 86, pictured third from left, was part of the improvisation show called *An Evening With Leon Black* at Montreal's Astral Theatre on July 24 and 25, part of the Just For Laughs Festival. The show starred comedian **J.B. Smoove**, second from left, who plays Black on HBO's *Curb Your Enthusiasm*. "They needed an obnoxious, arrogant French guy to act as Leon's interpreter during his talk show, someone who could improv — so they called me. I had a blast."

Readings at Chicago's Artemisia Theatre. *Trench Patterns* starred **Patricia Summersett**, BFA (theatre perf.) 07, as a Canadian Forces soldier returning from Afghanistan.

92 Jon Tucker, BFA, is a Montreal-based writer and filmmaker. He published his debut novel, *Putz of the Century* (Fast Hands Press) in 2012. Jon occasionally appears on *WireTap With Jonathan Goldstein* on CBC Radio One.

20TH REUNION

93 Emma Tibaldo, BA (Eng. lit.), is artistic and executive director of Playwrights' Workshop Montréal. Emma has directed several plays for Talisman Theatre including *Down Dangerous Passes Road*, which won the 2008-2009 Prix de la critique by L'Association québécoise des critiques de théâtre.

95 Isabelle Racicot, BA (comm. studies), made the transition from francophone

to anglophone media in August and is now hosting the weekend *Hit 20* countdown show on Virgin Radio 96 in Montreal. Isabelle continues to co-host the weekly chat show *Ça finit bien la semaine* on TVA.

97 Jamie Robinson, BA (theatre), **Quincy Armorer**, BFA (theatre) 97 and **Mike Payette**, BFA (theatre & develop.) 07, are among the founding members of Metachroma Theatre, Montreal's only independent theatre company of professional actors of colour. In September they presented their first play, William Shakespeare's *Richard III*, at the Segal Centre for Performing Arts in Montreal.

15TH REUNION

98 Rawi Hage, BFA (photog.), won the Paragraphe Hugh MacLennan Prize for fiction for his novel *Carnival* (House of Anansi Press) from the Quebec Writers' Federation in November. The book was



Paul Levesque, BA 57, centre, received a Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal on October 20. Paul is a former Canadian Olympic luge athlete and coach, and a long-time New York City-based financial advisor and volunteer for the Concordia University Alumni Association's New York Chapter. Senator and former hockey great **Frank Mahovlich**, left, bestowed the medal at a private reception at the Ottawa residence of **John McNab**, right, former Canadian deputy consul general in New York.

also shortlisted for a 2012 Rogers Writers' Trust of Canada Fiction Prize. As one of the five finalists, Rawi was invited to read at the International Festival of Authors in Toronto in October. His previous novels are *De Niro's Game* (2005) and *Cockroach* (2008). He lives in Montreal.

02 Oana Avasilichioaei, MA (Eng. lit. & creat. writ.), is a Montreal poet, translator and creative writing teacher. She won the A.M. Klein Prize for Poetry for *We, Beasts* (Wolsak and Wynn Publishers) from the Quebec Writers' Federation in November. Oana's previous books of poetry include *Feria: a poem park* (2008). She was founder and curator of the Atwater Poetry Project reading series in Montreal.

10TH REUNION

03 Sasson Khazzam, BFA, appeared in the play *The Widow Schwartz*, staged in November by the Hudson Players Club, a community-based amateur

group in Hudson, Que. Sasson lives in Montreal.

07 Massimo Farina, BFA, launched his business Static Pixels at the 2012 annual International Startup Festival at Montreal's Old Port in July. Static Pixels prints Instagram photos on five-inch squares made of light-weight cardboard of certified renewable and recycled materials. Massimo was invited to speak at the 2012 Art Directors Club Start Up Conference in Manhattan in September. staticpixels.com

Russ Makofsky, BComm, was featured in a short BBC travel video called *One Day in New York City*. Russ is founder of New York City Chess Inc., which operates scholastic programs, tournaments and events throughout Manhattan. He is co-president of the Concordia University Alumni Association's New York Chapter.

10 Mustafa Yunus, BA, is currently pursuing a master's degree in management at Harvard University in Boston. ■



David John Pike, BComm 89, recently released a classical music CD, *Whither Must I Wander? English Songs by Ralph Vaughan Williams, Gerlad Finzi and Roger Quilter* (Signum Classics). David, a baritone, is earning a growing reputation as an operatic and concert soloist who covers early music, oratorio, symphonic, opera and commissioned works. He lives with his family in Luxembourg. "After Concordia, I became a chartered accountant and eventually a partner with a 'Big Four' firm in Switzerland, and all the while singing. I now have my own company, the Professionals Network (theprofessionalsnetwork.com), which affords me the flexibility to give singing my 'full' attention while keeping active on the business front." davidjohnpike.com



University Women's Club of Montreal Inc.
Club des Femmes Universitaires de Montréal Inc.

"Social interaction, social responsibility and growth of women in all areas of life"

The University Women's Club of Montreal attracts women with diverse academic and professional interests. Meetings are held at the Atwater Club, where we have certain membership privileges.

Become a member!

Join an Interest Group or two and meet some very interesting women!

uwcm@uwcm.com
www.uwcm.com



Hon Docs

Concordia University bestowed two honorary doctorates during its fall convocation ceremonies at Place des Arts in Montreal on October 30.

Elsa Bolam, LLD 12, is the founder of Geordie Productions, a non-profit professional theatre company in Montreal. Established in 1980, Geordie Productions has made live theatre accessible to young Montrealers and isolated English-speaking and aboriginal communities across Quebec. Elsa has received numerous awards and honours including the American Film and Video Association Blue Ribbon Award and the 2002 Avon Canada's Women of Inspiration Award for Arts and Culture. She is a member of the Order of Canada.



Aldo Bensadoun, LLD 12, is founder and CEO of the Aldo Group Inc., a Montreal-based shoe retailer with more than 1,000 stores across Canada, the U.S. and abroad. Aldo is also a leader in sustainable business practices and is active in the fight against the spread of HIV/AIDS. He was appointed a Companion to the Order of the Business Hall of Fame in 2011 and named an Officer of the Order of Canada in 2012.



KEEP IN TOUCH

New job? Just moved? Just married? Or just want to let your former classmates know what you've been up to? Visit

alumni.concordia.ca/keepintouch

Or mail or email us any information about yourself – don't be shy – you'd like to appear in Class Acts.

Please include: your name (including name at graduation); year(s) of graduation and degree(s) from Concordia, Loyola or Sir George, and other universities; street address, phone number(s) and email address; and any other relevant personal or business info.

By email: alumni@concordia.ca Subject: Class Acts

By mail: Class Acts, Advancement and Alumni Relations, Concordia University, 1455 De Maisonneuve Blvd. W., FB 520, Montreal, QC H3G 1M8

Join the the Concordia University Alumni Association LinkedIn group at alumni.concordia.ca/benefits/olc.



PROJECTED LIFE PHOTOGRAPHY

Prita Chhabra, BSc (psych.) 07, won a 2012 Toronto Independent Music Award in October. The Montreal-based singer took home the prize in the Best World Music category for her singles "Roots" and "Dance." Prita has toured North America since her debut CD, *Spread the Word*, in 2010. In November, she was named an ambassador for the Canadian Foundation for AIDS Research.



Second Lieutenant Antoine Labranche, BA 09, has recently completed Phase II of flight training with NATO Flight Training in Canada, operated through Bombardier Aerospace, at 2 Canadian Forces Flying Training School in Moose Jaw, Sask. Phase II is the initial training course flown by Royal Canadian Air Force student pilots prior to their selection for advanced training in one of three categories: jets, multi-engines or rotary. The six-month course incorporated instrument flying, low-level navigations flown at 240 knots and 500 feet above ground, and formation flying.



Everett Melbourne Price, BA 65, Aug. 19, Montreal. He was 71. Everett started as an associate professor of political science in Concordia's Canadian Studies Program in 1972. He later became the first chair of the university's Department of Political Science and founder of the MA program in public policy and public administration. To contribute to the Dr. Everett M. Price Graduate Scholarship established in his memory, call 514-848-2424, ext. 3884.

James R. Yeatman, BA 37, Oct. 1, Vancouver. He was 97.

Blanche "Tiny" (Michlin) Rakita, BA 42, Sept. 19, Cleveland. She was 91.

Carl J. Zidel, BComm 48, Oct. 13, Montreal.

William Arthur Sauvé, BSc 50, Nov. 4, Lethbridge, Alta.

J. William (Bill) Harnott, attendee 50, Aug. 25, Montreal.

George W. Bossy, attendee 51, Oct. 29, San José del Cabo, Mexico. He was 85.

Samuel Lionel Gibbons, BComm 51, Oct. 19, Vaudreuil, Que. He was 84.

Raymond MacLennan "Mac" Pendleton, BA 51, Sept. 22, Montreal. He was 86.

Laizer Sirota, BA 51, Sept. 12, Montreal. He was 86.

Jean-Paul Morin, BComm 52, LLD 03, Aug. 24, Montreal. He was 91.

Philip Borrow, BA 53, Oct. 15, Montreal.

Gilles Cauchon, BComm 54, Aug. 16, Salaberry-de-Valleyfield, Que. He was 82.

Jacques St. Arnaud, attendee 54, Sept. 8, Saint-Sauveur, Que. He was 79.

Joseph Stephen Pal, BComm 55, Oct. 13, Toronto. He was 86.

Lawrence (Larry) Ascoli, BA 57, Sept. 20, Montreal. He was 82.

Henn Paabo, BComm 59, June 20, Ottawa. He was 83.

Tadeusz Jan Kubow, attendee 61, Sept. 30, Montreal.

Harvey Kalnitsky, BA 66, Sept. 20, Montreal. He was 67.

Robert G. Petrie, BComm 66, Oct. 3, Amherst, N.Y. He was 72.

Bernard Edward Rokas, BEng 68, Oct. 3, Montreal. He was 66.

William (Bill) Cusano, BA 69, Nov. 14, Montreal. He was 69.

Rev. Louis (Lou) E. Rivers, BA 70, Sept. 14, West Vancouver, B.C. He was 67.

George Roger Ryan, BA 71, Sept. 19, Montreal.

Vincenza Caldereri-Molluso, BFA 72, MA 73, MFA 96, Nov. 12, Montreal. She was 62.

Elizabeth Ann MacLeish, BA 73, Oct. 12, Ormstown, Que. She was 83.

Patricia O'Brien-Foster, BA 74, Cert 86, Sept. 28, Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Que. She was 84.

Constantin Joseph Held, BA 75, Aug. 22, Montreal. He was 59.

Lyse Catudal, BA 77, Nov. 6, Saint-Lazare, Que. She was 57.

Douglas A. Simpson, BComm 80, Oct. 31, Kirkland. He was 61.

John C. Smith, BComm 80, Aug. 31, Montreal. He was 79.

Sydney A. Williams, BA 80, Apr. 6, Montreal.

Douglas Allan Leslie, attendee 81, Aug. 25, Pickering, Ont. He was 55.

Cedric Ishmael Barclay, BA 82, Mar. 5, Hamilton, Ont. He was 60.

Betty Rosalind Louise (Brown) Rhind, BSc 83, Feb. 22, Montreal.

Irene Arseneault, BFA 84, Oct. 19, Hudson, Que. She was 55.

Teresa Masone, BComm 84, Sept. 17, Montreal. She was 51.

Jacqueline McClintock, BFA 86, Aug. 23, Toronto. She was 55.

Angelina van Leeuwen, BA 88, Oct. 9, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

Victoria Vera Wachowich, BA 89, Sept. 14, Edmonton. She was 89.

Velma Poch-Goldin, BA 90, MA 94, Sept. 9, Toronto. She was 76.

David S.O. Nalo, MA 91, Sept. 13, Nairobi, Kenya. He was 50.

Peggy Margaret Mary Juditha (Carlyle) Wiens, Cert 95, Oct. 14, Edmonton. She was 91.

Margaret McKay, BComm 99, Oct. 7, Montreal. She was 53.

Jason Daniel Nauth, BComm 03, Oct. 26, Montreal. He was 31.

Mathieu Edmond Frenette, BA 07, Sept. 29, Montreal. He was 29.

Andréanne Arcand, BComm 08, Mar. 15, Sorel-Tracy, Que. She was 25. ■

CORRECTION:

The fall 2012 In Memoriam incorrectly included Brian Jenkins, BA 91, BA 97. Brian is alive and well.

Of crime, breasts and poetry

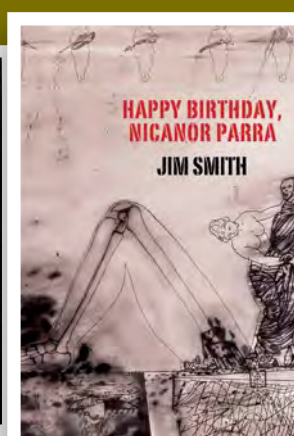
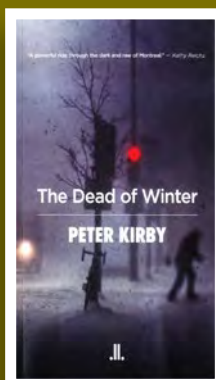
Peter Kirby, BA 80, recently published his first novel, *The Dead of Winter* (Linda Leith Publishing, \$21.95). The crime fiction follows Inspector Luc Vanier as he investigates the murder of five homeless people in Montreal, leading him to the Catholic Church, boardrooms of

The women share experiences of their emotional and physical scars. Carpenter sheds light on the issue through personal essays and stunning portraits. *Breast Stories* explores the role of breasts in our society and how they relate to femininity. Carpenter is a photo- and video-journalist at the *Montreal Gazette*

Algonquin College in 2000 and lives in Ottawa.

Jim Smith, MA 81, returns with a new twist on poetry books in *Happy Birthday, Nicanor Parra* (Mansfield Press, \$16.95). Smith eloquently translates Nicanor Parra's *Christ of Elqui*, revives the science-fiction works of

deflects media attention from upcoming elections, making matters difficult for Franklin's father, and Franklin. Polak is an English and humanities teacher at Montreal's Marianopolis College and a freelance journalist. She also wrote an award-winning historical novel, *What World Is Left* (2008), based on her mother's



Montreal's business elite, and soup kitchens and back-alleys of the homeless. An earlier version of the novel was shortlisted for the Crime Writers of Canada's Unhanged Arthur Award for best unpublished manuscript. Kirby practices international law with Fasken Martineau in Montreal. peterkirby.ca

In *Breast Stories: Cancer Survivors Speak Out* (Fitzhenry and Whiteside, \$32.95), photographer **Phil Carpenter**, BA 97, depicts the struggles of 53 Canadian breast cancer survivors who underwent mastectomies.

and a part-time instructor in Concordia's Department of Journalism. (For more, see *Accent*: concordia.ca/alumni/accent.)

In *Of Bats and Balls and Bonds* (Algonquin Publishing Centre, \$20, available through jillbillc@sympatico.ca), **Bill Conrod**, BSc 62, chronicles the last decade of the career of Barry Bonds, the controversial, record-breaking former Major League ballplayer. Through media reports, Conrod presents a sequential review of Bond's career and steroid-related fall. Conrod retired from

Judy Merrill, extends a few words of Archbishop Romero and takes the reader along the Ebro River in recollection of the Spanish Civil War. Smith has published several books and is a civil litigator at the Ministry of the Attorney General in Toronto.

Monique Polak, MA 84, returns with her 13th novel for young adults. Set in Montreal, *Pyro* (Orca Book Publishers, \$9.95) follows a troubled young boy, Franklin. With a mother who abandons him for her boyfriend and a busy mayor for a father, the boy takes to fire to forget his problems. A series of local blazes

Nazi concentration camp experience. moniquepolak.com

Dans *Enfanter l'inhumain : le refus du vivant*

(Éditions Triptyque, 25 \$), **Olivier Dyens**, BFA 1986, propose aux lecteurs de changer radicalement leur vision des humains et de l'humanisme. M. Dyens explore l'idée de « stigmergie », inspirée de l'araignée et de sa toile, où les hommes, avec leurs bactéries, leurs villes et leurs technologies, s'influencent et se créent mutuellement. Il invite ainsi les lecteurs à porter un regard différent sur les structures biologiques

et technologiques.

Ollivier Dyens est vice-recteur adjoint aux études à l'Université Concordia.

And the Crowd Goes Wild! A Global Gathering of Sports Poems

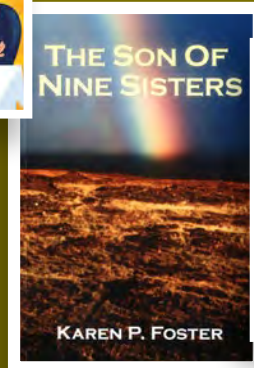
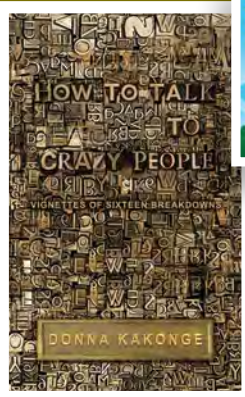
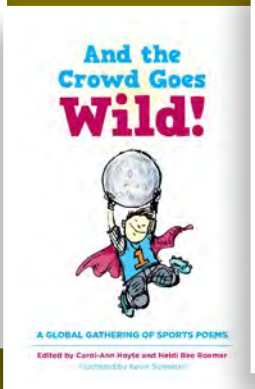
(FriesenPress, \$17.99, (crowdgoeswildpoems.com), co-created and co-edited by **Carol-Ann Hoyte**, BA (journ.) 97, is an anthology

through **How to Talk to Crazy People** (Life Rattle Press, \$25). In a collection of 43 vignettes, Kakonge portrays the experiences — from a minister trying to perform an exorcism on her to bathing naked at a party — of a young girl struggling to attain piece of mind. Kakonge is currently a PhD candidate in curriculum, teaching and learning development at

de Léo et de son frère Émile, tandis que *Mon restaurant préféré* porte sur l'anniversaire de la maman de Léo. Gabriel Anctil est chargé de programmation à Télé-Québec, à Montréal.

In **The Mandala Way** (Balboa Press, \$27.55), **Patrizia Viselli**, BFA 04, takes readers on an educational and spiritual journey of recon-

as she starts dreaming about Asgard, the kingdom of the Norse gods, and takes on the life of Heimdall, the son of nine sisters, the watchman of the gods. Paquin is currently a freelance writer and also writes a weekly blog, "The Wonder of Runes." ireadrunes.blogspot.ca (For more, see *Accent*, November 2012: concordia.ca/alumni/accent.)



of 50 poems, illustrated by Kevin Sylvester, about sports as varied as baseball, swimming, lacrosse, ping-pong, rock climbing and tennis. The anthology recently won a 2012 Moonbeam Children's Book Award, Bronze Medal in Children's Poetry, and was nominated for a 2012 Cybil (Children's and Young Adult Bloggers' Literary) Award. Hoyte is an assistant librarian at a Montreal school. A portion of the book's royalties will be donated to the organization Right to Play.

Donna Kakonge, MA (media studies) 99, shares her battle with a bipolar disorder

the University of Toronto's Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, and is pursuing an online law degree through the University of London International Programmes. donnakakonge.com

Mon grand frère et **Mon restaurant préféré** (Dominique et Compagnie, 9.95 \$ chacun) s'inscrivent dans une collection de **Gabriel Anctil**, BA 2003 (communication), et dont le personnage principal est Léo, quatre ans. Les différents thèmes explorent les émotions et découvertes des enfants d'âge préscolaire. *Mon grand frère* aborde la vie

necting with their innermost selves by creating mandalas. Through a step-by-step process, Viselli illustrates how these expressive art works can help improve self-confidence, intellectual abilities, attention spans and fine-motor skills. Viselli teaches mandala-making in Montreal. patriziaviselli.ca

The Son of Nine Sisters (The Jera Institute, \$15.60) by **Karen Paquin**, MSc 11, written under her pen name **Karen P. Foster**, explores Norse mythology with a contemporary character, Stacy, who has a dull future ahead of her. It all changes

Oh There You Are I Can't See You Is It Raining?

(Snare Books, \$12), by **Laura Broadbent**, BA 10, MA (Eng.) 12, is a poetry collection divided into three parts. The first explores language when it's free from desire. The second portrays how language must be flexible and free of borders. The final section reflects the different stages of confusion about love. Broadbent won the 2012 Robert Kroetsch Award for Innovative Poetry and is the reviews editor at Lemon Hound. lemonhound.blogspot.ca ■

—Shaimaa El-Ghazaly

Montreal Jubilation Gospel Choir at 30

BY TREVOR W. PAYNE, BFA 80

For thousands of Montrealers, the holiday season officially begins with the Montreal Jubilation Choir's annual concert. The group takes the stage, the beginning chords of "Highway To Heaven" fill the hall, the mighty Hammond organ swells and lifts the music. Before you realize it, choir members begin entering from the back — making their way towards the stage and passing within inches of the cheering crowd. Hands clapping, eyes sparkling and robes flowing, the choir dances their way towards the stage.

This year, we are celebrating our 30th anniversary and the launch of a new phase in our history.

Before the Jubilation Choir sang their first notes, I was involved in starting the Montreal Black Youth Choir. I was studying music at McGill University, having decided that my future was not in rock 'n' roll. Daisy Peterson Sweeny (Oscar's sister) was the reigning piano teacher in Montreal neighbourhood St. Henri's black community; she was organizing the annual recital for her students.

Daisy called me, saying: "Trevor, I'm having my yearly piano recital at Union United Church. I'd like you to come and show these kids that there is so much more available to them. You're studying music at a university level, and I want you to play the violoncello."



TREVOR W. PAYNE IS FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR OF THE MONTREAL JUBILATION CHOIR. | PORTRAIT OF DR. TREVOR W. PAYNE, OIL ON WOOD PAINTING BY STEVEN ROSATI

I really didn't want to play the violoncello, and in fact would do anything to get out of playing it! That is why I suggested it would be better if I taught her students a song and that I'd conduct their performance.

At the first rehearsal, there must have been 30 or 40 kids — some weren't even Daisy's students. At the concert, the congregation at Union United Church went wild! We did an encore and had to sing the same song again.

It was then that I realized performing and conducting were my calling. And that is why I decided to go to Concordia. Like today, it offered a flexible program tailored to the needs of individual students. Rather than making me study theory, music professor Sherman Friedland (now retired) allowed me to teach, guide the next generation of musicians and perform.

More confident in my own abilities due to my Concordia experience, the Montreal Jubilation Gospel Choir took off. Today we have performed for hundreds of thousands of people including presidents and prime ministers; travelled the world; won competitions; and provided a lifetime of musical enjoyment and fulfillment for choir members.

Receiving the Order of Canada, the Queen's Jubilee Medal and a JUNO Award for my work with the choir were exhilarating and humbling experiences. You cannot imagine what those awards mean to me — yet I admit I take more pride in meeting the recipients of the Trevor W. Payne Scholarship in Black Music at Concordia each year and knowing I have played a small part in helping them on their musical journey.

Next year we are starting a new chapter. We have set up the Gilead Jubilation Foundation (gileadjubilationfoundation.org) and are on the verge of launching our first fundraising campaign to support travel, so gospel music can be heard across Canada. We will sing in concert halls, church basements and elementary and secondary schools, from Prince George to James Bay and Corner Brook.

I have a renewed jump in my step because, thanks to the support of Montrealers, I will be pursuing my life's work, exposing young people of all ages to the power of gospel music and helping build bridges of

The congregation at Union United Church went wild! We did an encore and had to sing the same song again.

understanding between Quebecers and Canadians of different backgrounds.

Ever since I moved from Barbados to Montreal at the age of 10, I have always known that I wanted to be a musician. But it's Concordia that helped me channel my talent and provide me with the foundation to succeed.

Happy holidays, and may 2013 bring the joy of music to the world. ■



What if there were no curveballs?

Alumni Insurance plans can help prepare you for whatever life throws your way.

Term Life Insurance ■ Income Protection Disability Insurance
Major Accident Protection ■ Health & Dental Care
Critical Illness Insurance

Call us at **1-888-913-6333**

Or visit us online at www.manulife.com/concordia

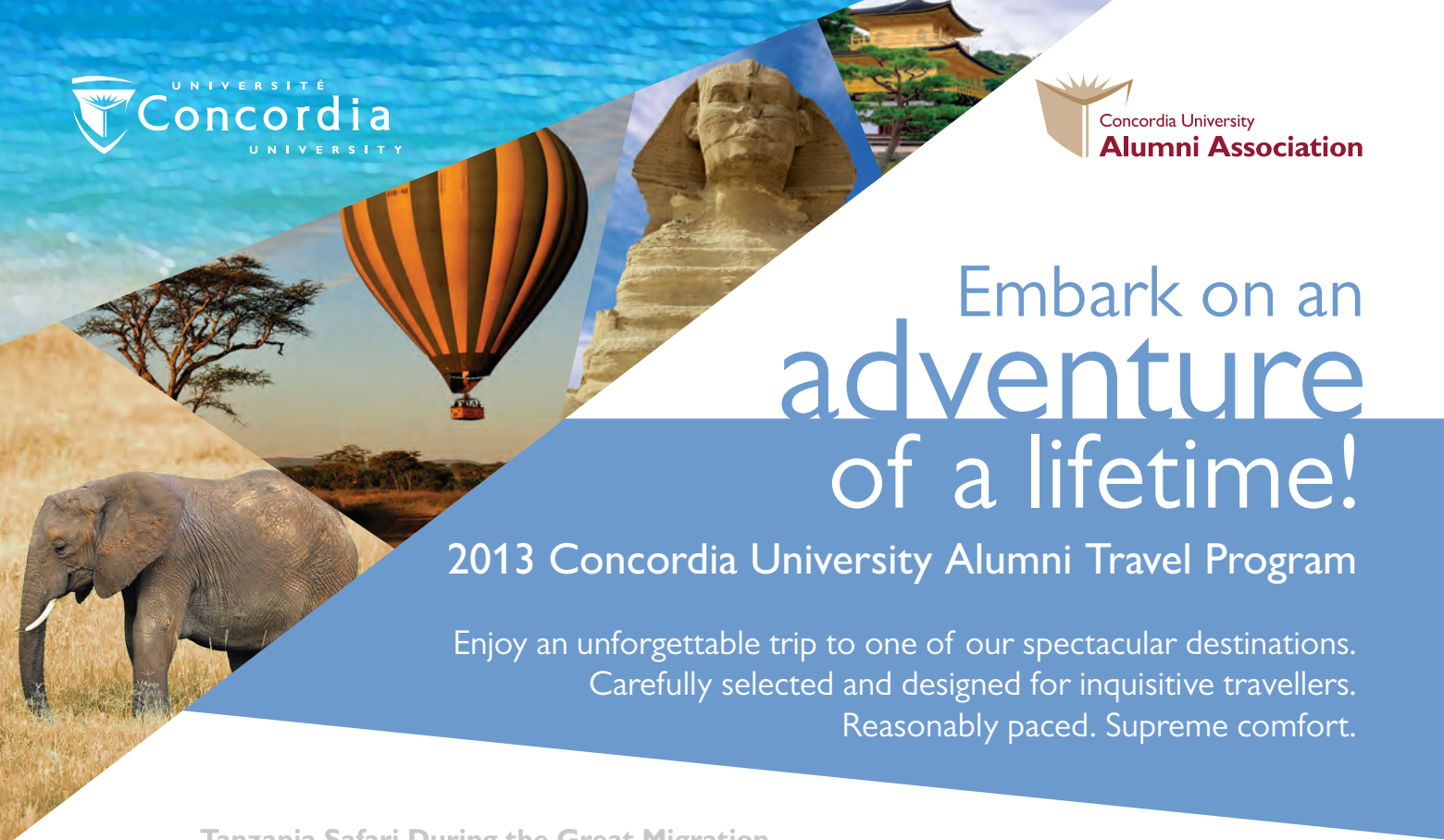


Underwritten by:

 **Manulife Financial**
| For your future™

The Manufacturers Life Insurance Company

ALUMNI INSURANCE PLANS



Embark on an adventure of a lifetime!

2013 Concordia University Alumni Travel Program

Enjoy an unforgettable trip to one of our spectacular destinations.
Carefully selected and designed for inquisitive travellers.
Reasonably paced. Supreme comfort.

Tanzania Safari During the Great Migration

February 16 to March 7, 2013

SOLD OUT

Treasures of Southeast Asia

February 16 to March 7, 2013

SOLD OUT

India: Rajasthan Exploration

March 1 to 14, 2013

Istanbul, Turkey

April 7 to 15, 2013

Sorrento: The Divine Amalfi Coast

May 1 to 9, 2013

Jewels of Antiquity: Cannes to Venice

May 28 to June 12, 2013

Explore Haida Gwaii (Queen Charlotte Islands)

June 6 to 14, 2013

Changing Tides of History:

Cruising the Baltic Sea

June 21 to July 2, 2013

Canada's Northwest Passage

August 27 to September 10, 2013

Symphony on the Blue Danube:

A Classical Music Cruise

September 18 to 30, 2013

Grand Journey Around the World

September 28 to October 23, 2013

Voyage of Ancient Empires:

Amalfi Coast, Pompeii, Sicily and Malta

October 4 to 12, 2013

For more information or to be added
to the travel program mailing list:

alumni.concordia.ca/travel

or contact us at:

alumnitravel@concordia.ca

514-848-2424, ext. 3819